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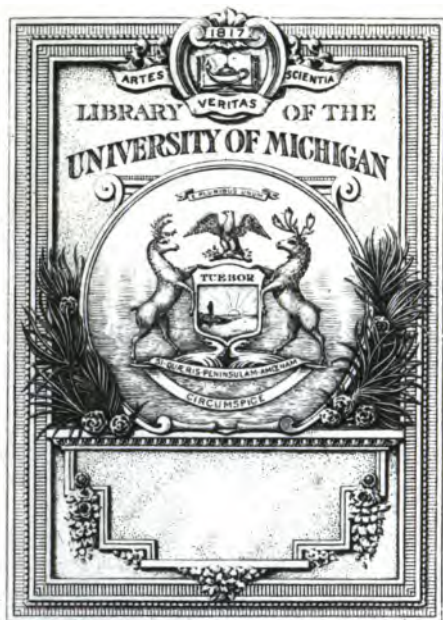
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THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE
OR FROM NIGHT TO TWILIGHT

FIRST EDITION *May, 1904*
Reprinted Same month

THE
VEIL OF THE TEMPLE
OR FROM NIGHT TO TWILIGHT

*William
Murray*
BY W. H. MALLOCK



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PREFACE

THIS Preface is due to unusual circumstances. Portions of the following work have appeared already in *The Monthly Review*. The earlier chapters remain more or less what they were ; but of the rest, what appeared in the Review was little more than a series of studies, *vignetted*, as a photographer would say, for purposes of periodical publication ; whilst of the concluding chapters, in the absence of which the meaning of the whole is unintelligible, it was not found practicable to give in the Review more than the most imperfect summary, reduced to a few pages.

Under these circumstances, it has been brought to my knowledge that a number of readers were offended to a very high degree by certain portions of the work as they appeared in the Review in question ; and in justice not only to these readers, who, doubtless, represent many others, but to myself also, it has been suggested to me that I should say a few words about the points to which they take exception.

The objectors, so I understand, all belong to the class which identifies the Christian religion with the

orthodox theology of the Churches. Such being the case, they must naturally be out of sympathy with those portions of the present work—and, indeed, of all works—which suggest that this theology, with its organic scheme of miracles and miraculous history, cannot, as it stands, be reconciled with the scientific knowledge of to-day. But as nothing, in this respect, is suggested in the present work which is not expressed by such writers as Carlyle and Emerson, by Professor William James, in his recent Gifford Lectures, and even by so devout a thinker as M. Auguste Sabatier, the special outburst of disapproval which the present work has elicited must be due to facts more special than a general disagreement like this between the writer and the objecting readers. The special facts involved I apprehend to be these:—

(i) The doctrines of orthodox theology are, in the opinion of the objectors, treated, as a whole, with a systematic and unbecoming levity.

(ii) The general tone of the work is in accordance with this levity, the real, if not the avowed, aim of the author being to bring religious belief of all kinds into contempt.

As the first objection depends largely on the second, let me begin by disposing of this, which rests altogether on a misconception. The religious question of the day, amongst the Western nations, is two questions:—Firstly, how does scientific knowledge affect the theology of the

Churches? Secondly, how does scientific knowledge affect those natural religious beliefs, the veracity of which the Christian religion, and all other religions, presuppose? It is true that certain arguments brought forward in the present work do suggest that the orthodox Christian theology, with its organic scheme of miracles and miraculous history, cannot, as it stands, be reconciled with modern scientific knowledge. The reader, however, with regard to this point is left to draw his own conclusions. If he can effect the desired reconciliation himself, he is free to do so. He will find his taste facilitated by the indication here given of its difficulties. The general argument of this work would be in no way affected by his success, except for the fact that it would supply him with a foundation for the very conclusions which he desires to reach. The question of Christian orthodoxy, as here treated, is subsidiary to the wider questions, of how far modern scientific knowledge is logically compatible with religious belief of any kind, and how far practical life and civilisation can continue to progress and flourish if religious belief should be banished from the human consciousness. With regard to these two last questions, the conclusion to which this book leads up, from the first chapter, and almost from every paragraph, is a conclusion which, though not coextensive with orthodoxy, is its primary essential; and is also the conclusion which, in the face of science, the clerical apologists of to-day find it most difficult to establish. The arguments here suggested are widely different from theirs, which

are here dismissed as useless ; but the object aimed at is, within the limits just specified, the same.

Such being the drift of the book, the charge of general flippancy in dealing with orthodox doctrine will probably lose, for this reason alone, most of its gravity in the eyes of most objectors. Should it fail to do so, I can only ask them to consider the character of the speakers to whom the flippancies complained of are attributed ; and farther, to remember that the aim of the book throughout is to translate the language of the philosopher, the professor, and the preacher into the ordinary language of men and women of the world. It must concern the clergy, more than any other body of men, to realise how the arguments which they put forward in church affect their congregations when they are outside the church door.

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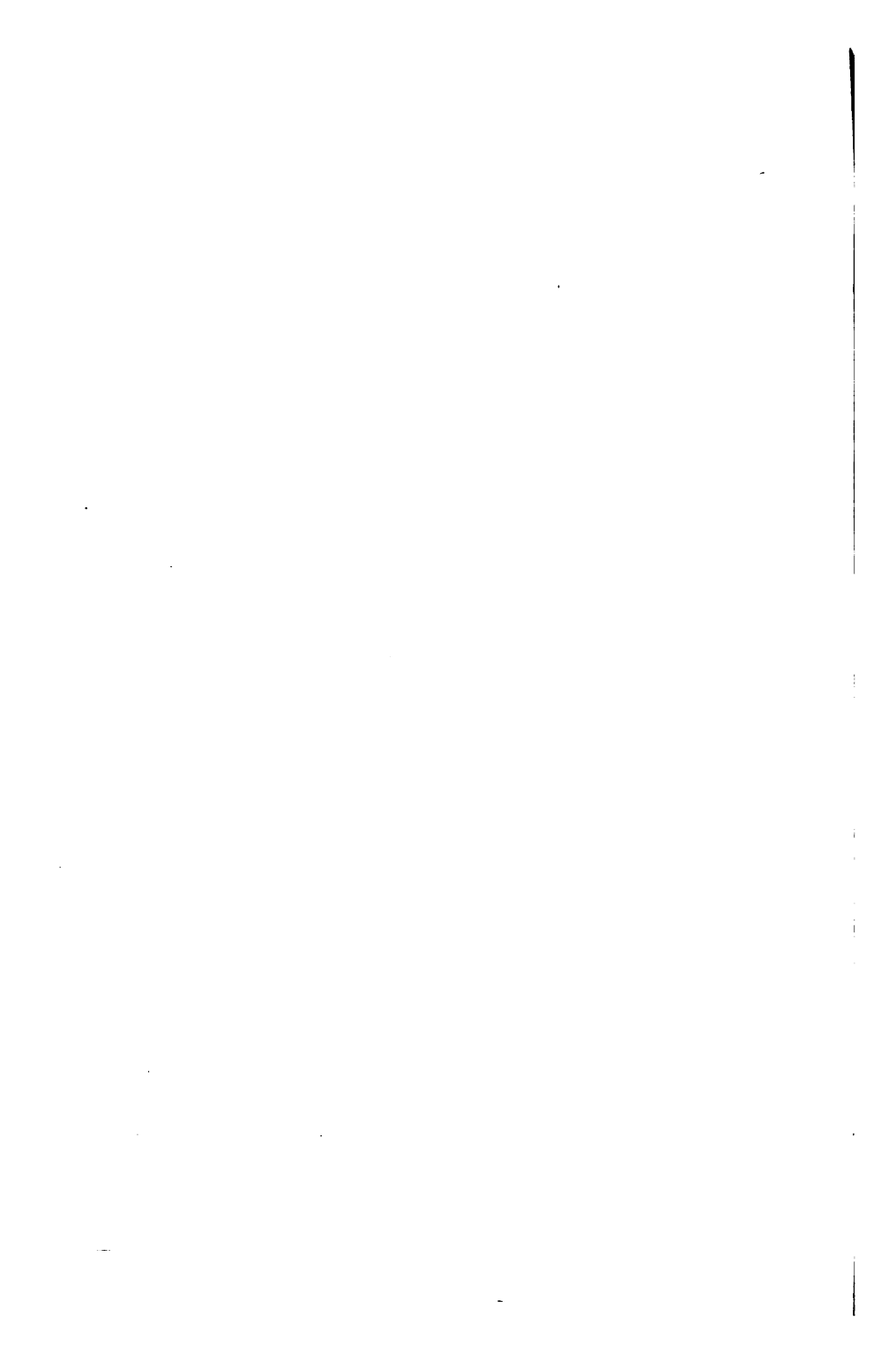
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BOOK I
WITHOUT, AND WITHIN



THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE

CHAPTER I

THE last great ball of a sultry and crowded season was illuminating one of those few London houses which allow the business of dancing, on such an occasion as this, to be little more than an episode in a brilliant evening party; and the ball having been preceded by a solemn dinner and concert, given with a view to the honour rather than the exhilaration of Royalty, various grave personages who had assisted at these earlier functions, such as elderly Cabinet Ministers, an Archbishop of Canterbury, and a Cardinal, were still lingering on a scene which had gradually changed its character. But incomparably graver in aspect than even the Archbishop himself was a tall, monumental man of commanding though abstracted demeanour, who had arrived under the wing of the popular and intellectual Mrs. Vernon, and who—to judge from appearances—had found in her his sole acquaintance.

Mrs. Vernon had presently joined a row of dowagers in tiaras, who, seated along one of the walls, were watching and criticising the proceedings; and her grave companion had seated himself in the chair

next her. Placed where he was, in the light of the chandeliers and the candelabra, he formed a singular object. His high dome-like forehead, his keen eyes, his long and compressed lips, betrayed a sense of his own power and consequence; whilst the limpness of his shirt-front, a beard like a ragged bib, his square-toed and thick-soled shoes, and a glimpse of white-thread stockings, gave to him alone, of all the men in the room, the distinction of a spiritual stranger—of a being from another star.

Mrs. Vernon at intervals would offer up to this deity an elaborately serious observation, as though it were a species of sacrifice, or propose in vain to introduce him to some celebrity. He would always, when this occurred, respond to her with condescending deference; but, singular to relate, the conversation going on around him evidently had for him a far more absorbing interest than that which his solicitous friend prepared for his private benefit. Her question, for instance, as to whether the Archbishop, who had once been nearly expelled from the English Church as a rationalist, could, in his old age, be really a believer in miracles, he showed a disposition to shelve rather than answer; but he seemed to hang on her syllables when, patting an embroidered knee, she informed two adjacent dowagers of the astonishing cheapness of her costume, which had, it appeared, cost only thirty guineas, whereas somebody called Katinka would not have made it for sixty. Nor did his attention relax when the ladies, after a long discussion of it, dropped this absorbing subject in obedience to an exclamation from Mrs. Vernon, which besought them to notice that a certain Molly Majendie—whom he identified as a dazzling fairy surrounded by several men—“was

actually back from Paris, laughing as if nothing had happened." He was all ears as he gathered that this vision in pearls and turquoises was supposed to have celebrated Whitsuntide with a brother officer of her husband's in a manner that was much too private, and at the same time much too public. He heard the story submitted in each of its damaging details to the search-light of a higher criticism which made rather for belief than doubt. He drank in Mrs. Vernon's words as she enunciated the sad conviction that, if conduct like this was condoned, the dissolution of society was inevitable; and then, with a stare of surprise, he realised that, a moment later, her gloomy anticipations had been dissipated, and the subject changed once more, by another ornamental apparition which was now conspicuous in the foreground, the vivid red of whose lips, and the rumoured relation of whose heart to the conjugal and pecuniary distresses of a Russian Grand Duke at Naples, became the immediate prey of a trio of discreet voices.

The grave listener gradually closed his eyes, as though anxious that no other sense should trespass on that of hearing; nor did he again open them till an eager question of Mrs. Vernon's as to "who it could be that Molly had got hold of now" suddenly made him conscious of the back view of a man on whom Mrs. Majendie was concentrating the choicest of her upturned glances. The man, as it seemed, was receiving this obvious homage with a light and tolerant laughter, when the lady with the red lips adroitly caught his attention, and, contriving to withdraw him from the circle of Mrs. Majendie's magic, at once set about trying on him the rival efficiency of her own. It was, however, plain that his thralldom

was very far from complete ; for, happening to turn his head, and catching sight of Mrs. Vernon as he did so, he broke with an easy excuse from the toils of the second enchantress, coming straight to the elder lady, who rose from her chair to greet him.

"So it's you!" she exclaimed warmly. "Why we thought you were still yachting." The two adjacent dowagers made two plump echoes of "So it's you"; and in spite of their heavy bracelets, lifted two gracious hands to him.

The listener at Mrs. Vernon's elbow found himself scrutinising a face which bore the stamp of intellect almost as clearly as did his own ; but whatever or whoever the new-comer might be, his intellect for the time appeared to have surrendered its place to a frank and familiar absorption in the scenes that were now surrounding him.

"We know," said Mrs. Vernon, "you've been yachting ; but we none of us quite know where."

"That," he replied, "is a statement which I have no difficulty in believing. My yacht has been lying in the roadstead of a ruined Roman watering-place—you never even heard its name—on the south coast of Asia Minor. Last year I was in Crete. This spring I've been doing a little private excavation on my own account."

"And what is your news?" asked one of the gracious dowagers.

"I've none," was the answer of the excavator. "I've been living for months in a town where not a single indiscretion has been committed for sixteen hundred years."

"In that case," said the dowager, "you must prepare your nerves for a shock. Mrs. Vernon and

I are going to commit two. Our first is to ask you—for you ought to be able to tell us—are those enormous pearls of Mrs. Majendie's real?"

"I confess," said the man, "I have not myself examined them; but Lady Eustace Orwell, only a moment ago, was weighing them with one hand, whilst she was caressing Mrs. Majendie with the other; and I'm certain, from her look of mortification, she discovered them to be not imitations."

The dowager leaned towards Mrs. Vernon. "My dear," she said, "isn't he wicked? And now for indiscretion number two. The lovely lady to whom you were talking last—is her colouring here"—and the dowager tapped her lips with her fan—"as real as the other one's pearls?"

"It's so many years," replied the man, "since I saw much of her that I really should be afraid to answer you; but no doubt she'll tell me. I'll ask her. My dear Beryl," he said, returning to the lady in question, who welcomed him back with a smile of petulant pardon, "you told me just now you were thirsty. Your beautiful lips are a very beautiful red. Do you think that a cup of hot coffee would hurt them?"

"You ought to know," she murmured slowly, fixing her eyes on his. "I'm not thirsty any longer. Sit down somewhere, and talk to me."

"Certainly," said the man, with an air of most obliging cheerfulness. "Where shall we be most conspicuous?"

"I don't like you," said the lady. "You've forgotten all about everything. I don't believe that you ever remember anybody."

The man laughed. "If my failing," he said, "is to remember nobody, yours, perhaps, is to remember

too many people. The latter fact may help to explain the former."

"Rupert," said the lady, "you're not nice at all. You'd better go back to your Mrs. Vernon."

"Well," said the man, "since you don't like me, I will. But, my dear, let us part in charity. My fault is due to the fact that I am growing old; yours to the fact that you always remain young."

Mrs. Vernon's grave companion, who had been watching the speakers closely, had inquired who this man—this antiquary from Asia Minor—was; and had given a visible start when he heard Mrs. Vernon's answer. "It is Rupert Glanville," she said. "Don't you know him—the late president of the Board of Trade?"

"Rupert Glanville!" he exclaimed. "You astonish me—you don't say so! One of the few promising writers on scientific philosophy—one of the very few politicians whose acts I could endorse as reasonable! So that's he, is it? Wonderful!"

Pleased with the appreciation which these utterances seemed to evince, Mrs. Vernon said eagerly, "Let me introduce you to him—do." But he put the proposal aside with a sort of distressed nervousness, and in order apparently to prevent the chance of its being carried out, he lifted himself out of his chair, and addressed himself to the business of leave-taking.

"My dear Mrs. Vernon," he said, in solemn and judicial accents, "I am deeply indebted to you for having brought me here. To-night I have observed, and I have observed with the greatest care, what is, I apprehend, called commonly the best society. I have listened, and listened in vain—I except, of course, your own conversation—for any

discussion of, or any single allusion to, any fact or general principle which is important to any reasonable being. For these men and women, to whom all the wealth and all the arts of the modern world minister, the only serious matters, so far as I am able to judge, are particulars like those which are serious for the gossips of the village snuff-shop—the price of the petticoats of one woman; the extent to which another laces her liver into some wrong part of her body; the paint, the glass beads, or the stone beads of a third; and above all, the frequency with which this or that spangled puppet violates, or is supposed to violate, those principles of monogamous ethics, the social importance of which she is too feather-headed to comprehend. Facts like these are not life; they are playthings. And I actually,” he continued, “find here, comporting himself no more sanely than the rest—equally preoccupied with the particular, equally forgetful of the universal—a man who might, if he chose, be a true leader of thought. Mrs. Vernon, good night. This is my first fashionable party. I may safely aver that it will be my last.”

“Who in the world was that?” said a voice in Mrs. Vernon’s ear.

She turned, and saw that the questioner was Mr. Glanville himself. “He’s someone,” she said, “who’s been asking the same thing about you. Take his chair, and I’ll tell you. That was no less a person than the great Mr. Cosmo Brock.”

Mrs. Vernon had named a man who, indeed, might be called great. Not only in England, but in Germany, Russia, and America, Mr. Brock was recognised alike by his friends and foes as the chief philosophic unifier of the world’s scientific know-

ledge; and he had recently crowned the labours of fifty years by a volume which claimed to exhibit the moral life of man, not as a mystery connected with the vanishing dreams of priests, but as a good intelligible process like those of growth or digestion.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Glanville, "that he's gone. I should like to have made his acquaintance. Did he tell you he'd taken a cottage of mine for the summer months in Ireland?"

"No," said Mrs. Vernon, "he did not; but he told me one thing—that he was horrified to find you enjoying yourself in a frivolous place like this—a place where nobody talks a single word of philosophy; but where everybody is chattering gossip, or else is providing food for it. Well," Mrs. Vernon added, casting down her thoughtful eyes, "perhaps he is right in turning his back on all of us."

"My good friend," replied Mr. Glanville, "if you think that, why do you come here? Why did you take the trouble to put on those beautiful diamonds? Why did you or your husband go to the expense of buying them?"

This sudden attack was not to Mrs. Vernon's taste. "I don't mean," she said, with a faint note of impatience, "that everybody here is an idle and frivolous person. I mean that people, as you see them in a place like this, are showing for the moment merely the more frivolous side of themselves."

"That depends," said Mr. Glanville, "not so much on what they are showing as on what *you* are looking at. If you look at a clear pool you must, I am sure, have noticed that, according to the focusing of your eyes, you may see inverted foxgloves, or you may see the water itself, or the stones

flickering at the bottom of it. In looking at a party like this you may have just the same experience. For instance," he continued, sinking into a more comfortable attitude, "sitting here, I see the frivolous surface as you do. I see the wig of a great-aunt of mine floating on it. I believe this is her hundredth birthday. I blink my eyes, and shining below the frivolous surface I see youth which fancies that its fate may be awaiting it under every palm tree—as I myself did once—and hopes to find in some kiss the sacrament of its faith in happiness, before that lamp-lit garden begins to grow haggard in the morning. I blink my eyes again, and I see age and maturity, and even youth, grown a little less youthful, trying to find some substitute for the happiness which is gained by nobody, or else drilling themselves to disguise, or contriving to forget, sorrow."

Though Mrs. Vernon had spent most of her life exclusively in what is called the world, she had nevertheless a certain strain of romance in her. In her youth she had married a man who was at the time poor; and a breach between her mother and herself, which had never been healed, had been the consequence. She looked at Mr. Glanville gravely, and, in spite of herself, she sighed. She was not, however, given to sighing, and she quickly recovered her serenity. "No one," she said lightly, "would think you had many sorrows, to look at you."

"Yes," he said, "I have one. I had hardly any dinner, and I'm hungry. I see that the supper-room's open. Shall we help each other up and go?"

Mrs. Vernon assented with alacrity. She was once again all smiles; and if anything was wanting to restore her to her normal self, it was supplied by

a refreshing benediction from Royalty as she entered the supper-room. She and her companion found seats at a table which was vacant except for two of her own most fashionable intimates ; and Mr. Glanville for some minutes, like Mr. Cosmo Brock, was merely a listener to her conversation with the lady next whom she had placed herself. "Do you mean," he heard her saying in answer to some question, "that ugly red-headed man who is spoiling Lady Croydon's fan for her? Don't you know? It's Lord Croydon's latest understudy. Would you like to meet them both? They are dining with me on Friday week. My dear, I must tell you—Mr. Glanville, you're not to listen—I must tell you what happened at Hurlingham." Thereupon followed a series of mysterious whispers, which Mrs. Vernon concluded with the audible and crisp observation that "it was bad enough for Agatha Croydon to lose her brilliant complexion, but it was very much worse for everybody when we found it on his shoulder." "Ah," she exclaimed, beckoning to another friend in the background, "here are two chairs. Come here." And presently at Mr. Glanville's side a flutter of tulle and a glimmer of pearls descended ; whilst the babyish and fugitive pressure of an arm applied to his own gave him delicate notice of the presence of Mrs. Majendie.

"My dear Molly," said Mrs. Vernon, stretching across him to shake hands with her, and generously forgetful of her own late judgments and prophecies, "I've been trying all the evening to get at you. Are you dining out on the twenty-fifth? Come to me if you're not. You, too, Mr. Glanville—both of you. Telephone to-morrow morning when you've looked at your books of engagements."

Mrs. Majendie laid a hand appealingly on Mr. Glanville's cuff. "I'm sure you've a pencil," she said. "Be a dear, and write down the day for me."

Mr. Glanville did so on a menu, whilst Mrs. Majendie's lawful partner sat staring at distant objects in attitudes of furious indifference. Mrs. Majendie bent over the card in an artless and confiding manner, till one of her flowers had the air of belonging to Mr. Glanville's button-hole. Mr. Glanville looked at her with a smile in which memories of her began to mantle.

"Have you bought," he said, "any more of those charming little green-and-gold books which you carried about in Scotland, along with your cigarette-case, in a charming little green-and-gold bag?"

Mrs. Majendie returned his look. All the complicated instincts of flirtation appeared to be celebrating a kind of Walpurgis-night in her eyes.

"Do you remember," he continued, "how I found you one day, on a sofa, in a rose-du-Barry tea-gown, reading *Thomas à Kempis*?"

"My dear little books—I love them," said Mrs. Majendie softly. "Perhaps some day you'll advise me a little about my reading. I've no one to help me about anything that really matters."

"I think," said Mr. Glanville, attuning his voice to hers, "I could advise you as to one point now. Your eyes, when you read, look beautiful. Reading, for a face like yours, is a kind of spiritual cosmetic; and the green morocco of your bindings is very becoming to your hand. But the next time you take up *Thomas à Kempis*—may I suggest one thing?"

"Please," murmured Mrs. Majendie. "It would be nice of you."

"Well," said Mr. Glanville, "don't hold him upside-down."

The petals of a blush opened on Mrs. Majendie's cheek. Mr. Glanville laughed. "You're a nasty story-teller," she said; and turning sharp round to her partner, exclaimed sharply to him, "What's the good of you? I thought you were to get me a quail."

This onslaught restored the neglected man to beatitude, whilst Mr. Glanville resumed his attentions to Mrs. Vernon.

"I am very much afraid," he said, "that I can't dine as you asked me. I should like to have met Lady Croydon and Lord Croydon's understudy. But tell me," he went on gravely, "in the days when you were first married, were people as kind as apparently they are now? You, for instance, when your own husband had what you call an understudy—did they ask you and that happiest of mankind to meet each other?"

Mrs. Vernon stared at him as if she could hardly believe her ears. "I don't know what you mean," she said, in a voice hardly recognisable as her own. For a couple of seconds Mr. Glanville defied the lightning. Then his gravity melted.

"I know," he said, "you are everything that the wife of Cæsar ought to have been. You are horrified at the idea that anyone should imagine you otherwise. But I want you to tell me this, for you really have made me curious. Why do you—a clever woman like you—treat conduct in other women as a pretty foible to laugh about, and even as a reason for asking them to your house to dinner, when you'd murder them or tear their eyes out if they ventured to attribute it to yourself?"

Mrs. Vernon had by this time swallowed her rage. She had even abstractedly swallowed a piece of lobster as well; but—a rare occurrence with her—she was somewhat at a loss for an answer. At last with a cough and an effort she began huskily, “I suppose the explanation of that lies deep down in human nature. I might as well ask you what makes you talk as you’ve been doing to that little minx on the other side of you, when you can’t by any possibility——”

Here, however, she was interrupted by a young son of the house, who, standing by her chair, was presenting her with a telegram marked “Urgent.” “I took it,” he said, “from one of the servants, who was wandering vaguely in search of you.”

Mrs. Vernon’s hand shook a little as she received the unexpected missive. Then she gave it to Mr. Glanville, saying, “I wish you’d open it. I hope there’s nothing wrong with Robert. Don’t read it here. Come to some place that’s quiet.”

They both rose. “Let us go,” he said, “into the garden.” Mrs. Vernon was presently passing out through an open window, whilst Mr. Glanville for a moment paused to look at the telegram. The walks were bordered with rows of twinkling lamps, and glimmering skirts and the black forms of men moved through an artificial twilight that tingled with laughing whispers.

“Here,” he said, “sit down. It’s nothing to do with Vernon, and you have not lost your fortune on the Stock Exchange. The news is serious, but you can bear it. Your mother died an hour ago at Brighton. Would you like to go home? Tell me. Would you like me to see you to your carriage?”

“No, no,” she said absently. “Let me sit on here

a little longer and talk to you." Mr. Glanville waited for her to begin. He waited for a long time. "What a horrid woman I am!" she exclaimed at last. "Do you know what it is I've been thinking about?"

"Yes," he said, smiling slightly, "I know perfectly well. You've been thinking about that dinner of yours for the twenty-fifth—that delightful dinner for the little minx and the understudy, which will have to be put off."

"How on earth," she asked, starting, "how on earth do you know that?"

"Merely," he said, "because this party is an epitome of human nature. If you like, I can tell you more. You've been thinking also about all your other engagements, and your smart new frocks that will be wasted, and your mourning, and who shall make it. Myself, I should recommend Jay's."

"Do you despise me?" said Mrs. Vernon, whose eyes were ceasing to be quite dry. "Do you look on me as utterly devoid of feeling? I'm not, though I know I seem so."

"Nonsense," he said kindly. "You don't seem so at all. Whenever anything happens like that which has happened now, our thoughts fly for refuge to some spot that is far from the real catastrophe. The Hebrew prophets made refuges of this kind deliberately. They rent their garments when denouncing the sins of their countrymen, so as to forget the divine wrath in their sorrow for their own torn trousers."

Mrs. Vernon laughed faintly. "Keep on talking," she said. "It calms my nerves to listen."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Glanville, "you're beginning to feel now that it's a little incongruous for you to

be still sitting on at a ball, which, according to you, is a mere scene of frivolity."

"Yes," murmured Mrs. Vernon, as though she were talking to herself. "Mr. Brock was right when he said that a party like this is not life—it's nothing."

"And I," said Mr. Glanville, "tell you that the great Mr. Brock was wrong. Let us grant, if you like, that what we have here is frivolity. The frivolity of man is itself as serious a fact as death—and just as universal a fact. A ball like this, though perhaps you may not think it, represents a great deal more than the amusement of a small rich class. It really represents the struggles of all humanity—of clerks and shop-girls round the bandstand on Margate Jetty—of bricklayers in their public-houses—of colliers with their pigeons and greyhounds—of children dancing on the pavement—the struggle for what this world can give. In a ball of this particular kind there is one peculiarity only—that the world is doing its utmost so far as its powers extend; and it is only when it is doing its utmost that we can judge of its resources fairly. And by itself, what can it do? I know it well; and it has treated me with great generosity. I have no quarrel with it. But the best and most friendly action that the world can do me now is to distract my attention from what it has failed to give. I asked you—you remember—why the tone of your conversation in society had so little connection with the principles that govern your private conduct. I can tell you one of the reasons. In society we are like plovers. We make our several noises at a distance from our own nests—because our nests are so full of what we value that we don't want others to look at them; or

else because they are so empty that we don't want to look at them ourselves."

"It surprises me," said Mrs. Vernon, "to hear you talking in this way. I thought you cared for nothing."

"Well," said Mr. Glanville, laughing, "that, perhaps, is my malady. I don't care any longer for this party, at all events. Whenever you like to go, you will find me eager to follow you. Shall it be now? Come, then, and listen. I have something to propose to you. My mother's great-grandfather," he continued, as they both rose, "was an Irish bishop."

This opening statement was not particularly illuminating; but Mrs. Vernon, by the time he had put her into her brougham, had both understood his proposal and had accepted it.

Mr. Glanville, when she had driven away, strolled down the line of carriages which were crawling up to the portico with its crimson drugget. Through gates of gilded ironwork he gained the street outside. The night was stifling. The street, with its wood pavement, roasted by weeks of drought, smelt like an open drain. A rush of unrelenting noises beset him as he walked home. Splinters of the pavement blew in his eyes and nostrils. "Only," he said to himself, "a week or so more of this, and then——" But he was here interrupted by the sound of his own name, and he found himself overtaken by one of his late ministerial colleagues, who explained that he had followed him from the ball on purpose to get a word with him.

"I saw," he said, "in the papers you were just back from the East. If I hadn't caught you I should have written. Our friend Mrs. Vernon to-night

wouldn't give me a chance. At any rate, I suppose she's told you all the Cabinet secrets."

"For the last four months," said Mr. Glanville, "I've forgotten that Cabinets exist. She mercifully forbore from reminding me of the unwelcome fact."

"You haven't heard, then," said his friend, "what has happened during the past week? Our great man has taken the plunge at last. The murder will be out next week, and Heaven knows what will come of it. There's bound to be a split in the Cabinet before the end of the autumn. But first—upon my word, he's a wonderful tactician, our friend is—the country is to be educated by means of an official inquiry, and you, my dear Glanville, are the man of all men to conduct it. It's your own subject. You're the best statistician we have. You needn't," he said, when at last he had fully unburdened himself, "you needn't decide at once. To-morrow I must go to Scotland; but think the matter over, and meet me a fortnight hence. I shall be back in London then. Saturday week—do you think you could manage that?"

"No," replied Glanville, laughing. "I'm sorry to say I couldn't. And yet, my dear fellow, when I think of the reason why, though it doesn't sound civil to say so, I feel uncommonly glad. And yet again," he continued, suddenly stopping in his walk, "should my help really be necessary, I will not shrink from helping you; but don't, before my time, call me back to the house of bondage."

CHAPTER II

AN early morning of July was crystal, streaked with vapour, as it shone on the sheds and offices of a small railway junction, and the dews that were still fleecy on the pebbles of its gravelled platform. All around was a country of moorland and bare hills, and long undulations coloured with purple heather. In the neighbourhood of the station were a few whitewashed buildings, including one which proclaimed itself an hotel and a posting-house, whilst dotting the distance were far-scattered, low-browed cabins, from some of which wreaths of smoke were already straying across the air. Except for these wreaths of smoke, all the world seemed sleeping.

On the platform were a few fish-hampers and a pile of unguarded luggage. A short siding was occupied by a spick-and-span varnished car, obviously pertaining to a new light railway. Moisture was dripping from its roof and trickling down its windows. Presently the opening of a door jarred on the deep stillness. A porter issued and went slouching along a line of palings to a gate above which was a board bearing the words "Way Out." He lifted the latch as though to admit someone, and another sound was by this time adding itself to that of his movements. It was the sound of voices in conversation near the opposite end of the platform, which

two figures were approaching from the open moor beyond, picking their way lazily through the gorse and the long grasses.

One of them was dressed carelessly in an ulster of rough Scotch tweed, and his reddish hair curled in a swinging mass, which gave him the air of an unshorn German student. His companion, on the contrary, though his clothes were far from new, bore in every detail of his person the stamp of unconscious fashion, and he moved with the easy gait of a man who could command the world.

"Alistair," said the latter to his companion, looking round him at the wild landscape, "I'm like Christian when he lost his burden. There's a magic for me in every heather-bell, and even in those black ruts worn by the peasants' peat-carts. I feel as young as the morning, and presently we shall both feel younger: for—look, my dear fellow—Jackson has done his duty. He has got us a table from the inn, and is bringing it now on the platform, and here comes somebody else with the breakfast and a clean tablecloth. I can smell the delightful smell of the bad coffee already. Now," he went on, when they had reached the table in question, at which a well-groomed English servant was busy with plates and dishes, "let us eat and be thankful, as though we were still two undergraduates. What—do you mean to say that you turn up your nose at the butter? If your fork is dirty, clean it by running the prongs through your napkin. The coffee is mud, but for me it is mud enchanted. I told you, you know, that I was taking you into the wilderness. I hope you're not frightened by this beginning of hardships. We're still—though perhaps you haven't quite grasped the fact—fifty miles from the hermitage in

which I am going to immure you. I ordered a carriage to take us the whole of the way by road ; but we can, if you like it better, wait here a couple of hours and go part of the way in that car, by the new light railway. We could either get out at a station twenty-five miles off, and drive to my hermitage, another twenty-five miles from there ; or we could go on to Ballyfergus, where the light railway ends, and finish our journey with twenty miles of sea. Ballyfergus is an odd little watering-place which is just rising into fame. It's a great resort of the clergy, and a clerical hotel has been started there, with a low tariff, a chapel, and a room for religious conferences. The gay worldlings of Ballyfergus will be our distant and our only neighbours."

The man addressed as Alistair declared himself, without hesitation, in favour of making the whole journey by road ; and proceeded to rally his friend on the fact of his having turned his back on the luxuries and excitements of civilisation, and burying himself in a seclusion so rude as that for which they now were bound.

"At Oxford," he said, "you laughed at me for my obstinately simple tastes. Yours have at last become more primitive even than mine."

The two breakfasters were still lingering over their coffee-cups when their sense of privacy was disturbed by a rumbling sound, and a short train of unwashed, wheezing carriages slid by them, and drew up with a jerk. A few peasants descended, who quickly passed through the wicket, and were lost to sight before the train had gone on again ; and the breakfasters, having cast a glance at them, were preparing to light cigars, when the one whose conversation showed that he was about to be the

host of the other, perceived that the train had deposited, not the peasants only, but also a pile of bulky feminine luggage, and a woman standing by it, who had all the air of a maid.

"That luggage," he said, "I'll bet you what you please, is not going to the Clerical Hotel at Ballyfergus."

His interest had at once been aroused, and a moment later it was increased when a second female figure—evidently the maid's mistress—was seen to emerge from the booking-office, in consultation with the solitary porter. A long, coral-coloured cloak accentuated rather than hid the grace of her erect form. The spirit of daintiness showed itself unmistakably in the tips of her boots, her hat, and a bracelet on a gloved wrist.

"She," said the man who was watching her with a smile of half-amused appreciation, "is not going, my dear Alistair, to the Clerical Hotel either. The old Adam in me insists on having his curiosity gratified."

He rose and strolled negligently in the direction of the tantalising stranger. His friend's eyes followed him. They saw him pass her with the slightest of momentary looks at her, as she still remained talking to the porter. Then they saw him suddenly check himself, return to her, and raise his hat. To all appearances, her first surprise being over, she received his advances civilly. A short conversation followed; and then, to his friend's astonishment, he and the lady walked together in the most amicable manner towards the breakfast-table.

"I'm sure," said the gentleman when they reached it, "you will find this better than the inn. My friend and I can bequeath you some execrable coffee

to begin with—we're just going off in a carriage whose wheels I hear already—and your maid will extract from the innkeeper whatever he has to give you. Jackson, go with this lady's maid to the inn, and see that something to eat is sent out to her here ; and you, my dear Alistair, will you pick out from your luggage the things you want to take in the carriage with you?"

The lady, who had meantime accepted a chair he had offered her, thanked him in a musical voice, with an air of the most suave composure. His eyes sought hers through her veil, and a laugh was exchanged between them.

"Would you," he said, "think me very officious and presuming if I brushed away these bread-crumbs for you, and perhaps sat down for a minute or two? I shall hardly have time to make myself very objectionable."

"I've driven your friend," said the lady, "from his chair already. I should not be human if I drove you from yours also."

She laid, as she spoke, a small book on the table, and with a pair of delicate hands proceeded to raise her veil. She was young, though she was no mere girl. Her complexion had the pallor of illness ; but her cheeks showed already the pink of returning health. In her dark, thoughtful eyes was a softness that was almost sullen ; but they laughed when she spoke, and the corners of her mouth kept them company. Her companion looked at her with a glance of respectfully diffident curiosity, which then, with adroit promptitude, transferred itself from her to her book. The title, legible in clear, gold letters, surprised him.

"What !" he said. "Do you read Pascal?"

"If you doubt it," she replied, "you may open the book where the marker is, and you'll see I've put a cross against a passage where I don't agree with the gentleman."

"Is this it?" he asked her, taking up the book and reading. "'True conversion is to abase ourselves before this Sovereign Being, whom we have so often provoked, and who may, at any moment, without the least injustice, destroy us.'"

"To my mind," said the lady, "that sort of thing is silly. If the Sovereign Being made us, he made us what we are. Why do we merit his wrath because we're not something else? Would a converted canary apologise for the sin of being not a bullfinch? But I must not," she went on, "keep you from your friend and your carriage. Your friend, I am sure, among the possible misfortunes of his journey, never included a delay caused by your discussing theology with a stranger whose mind is too weak for anything but a railway novel."

"I will," he exclaimed, "take you and your word about one thing." He rose, and went quickly to the gate, where the carriage was now waiting; and a moment later came back again bearing a yellow volume. "You've two hours to spend here," he said. "This will be a change from Pascal. It's a story which, when once you've begun it, you must read to the end; and which no one who had read it to the end could ever open again. I've read it to the end myself; and so, if I may make you a present of it, its value need not embarrass you."

"Thank you," she said, with a charming and cordial laugh. "Thank you a thousand times. I've not read a novel for weeks. I've been having a rest-cure, and am now going to finish it by the sea."

"I think," he said, "I can guess the place. If I happen to see you there, I shall struggle for sufficient effrontery to ask you how you liked the novel, and if you still think so ill of Pascal."

He was lifting his hat and preparing to say good-bye, when she rose from her seat and frankly held out her hand to him.

"I'm sure," she said, as she looked at him, "that I've seen your face before."

"Perhaps," he replied, when his hand parted from hers, "you have seen some caricatures of it, and may one day see some more."

CHAPTER III

"**I**S that your hermitage," exclaimed Alistair Seaton at last, "that building like a little Greek temple at the edge of these long woods?"

"Does it look too small for you?" inquired Rupert Glanville, for the speaker was none other than he. "Don't be disheartened till we get to it. My butter, at all events, will be eatable, and your bed will be quite clean."

By this time it was late in the afternoon. The travellers had been delayed at a village where they changed horses, by the fact that one of the animals bespoken and got ready for their service had been borrowed by the priest, shortly before their arrival, to carry him off to the bed of a dying parishioner; and several hours elapsed before they could resume their journey. At last there had risen into view stretches of green woodland; and the unfenced road, bordered with stones and heather, was descending now towards them. In one place the woods parted; between them was the bloom of the sea, and white against the dark foliage the building, like a little Greek temple, formed an odd and incongruous object in the primitive and lonely landscape.

"Look," said Rupert Glanville, as they approached it, "in the portico of the temple is a goddess. Do you think she is Pallas Athene, and

would you like to talk Greek to her? Myself, I shall try the vernacular. Ah, Mrs. O'Flanagan, and it's glad I am to see you again," he shouted, leaning from the carriage as soon as they came within ear-shot of her. The goddess, who appeared as antique as Pallas Athene herself, but whose lips were creased round the stem of a short modern tobacco-pipe, responded with a low curtsy; and the carriage, instead of stopping, swept into the shadow of the trees. The surface of the road now suddenly changed. It was smooth and gravelled. On either side was an undergrowth of luxuriant rhododendrons, and a mile or so further on the carriage, turning sharp round a corner, drew up before a building—a mixture of dilapidation and grandeur—which was something like the little Greek temple, on a very much magnified scale. Stucco was peeling everywhere, like a patient after scarlet fever; but the echoes of a portico more capacious than the entire dwelling of Mr. O'Flanagan gave the travellers a hollow and majestic welcome. The tall doors were at once thrown open by servants whose clothes and demeanour had all the air of London; and Alistair Seaton realised that his friend's hermitage was in some ways a different place from what he had been led to anticipate.

On entering, his steps resounded in a bare vestibule, furnished only with a couple of old marble tables, on which stood some busts and some small Roman altars. From this he followed his host into an inner hall, where his eyes were met with a vision of statues, a double staircase, and bad eighteenth-century copies of huge Italian paintings. A moment later he had passed into a small library lined with the glimmer of books in old calf bind-

ings, and full of a homely sense of habitation and intimate comfort. The window was open; there were roses in china bowls, and a table prepared for tea was shining with Irish silver.

"So this," said Alistair Seaton, with a laugh of half-pleased disappointment, as he contemplated a dish of crescent-shaped French rolls, "so this is the hermit's cell? If I didn't see the mitre of a Christian bishop on your butter-pats, I should feel like a monk in a desert, who had been seduced into an enchanter's garden."

"I said," Glanville replied, "I could promise you good butter. Sit down and eat, and I'll tell you what this place is. It was built by my mother's grandfather, in the reign of George III. He was a bishop of the Church of Christ as established by law in Ireland. Hence the mitre on the butter-pats. He was a prelate of the finest taste—a scholar, a collector, a dilettante. He spent half his time in Italy, but was an excellent Irish landlord. He kept several mistresses, and he travelled in a coach-and-six. All the Churches will have probably come to an end before any one of them has another ornament like him. In the garden is a small museum, which he built for his thefts from Pompeii; and my own treasures from Asia Minor have by this time been added to the collection. When you've finished your tea we'll see how my man's arranged them."

The open window admitted them to a balustraded terrace, along which, in a row of tubs, orange-trees were enjoying the summer. The air which fanned their leaves was warm, and smelt of flower-beds; and the waves below, beginning to shine pink in the sunset, were gently, with a resonant murmur, raking the shingle into their hollows.

"Do you see," said Glanville, "on the slope, at the side of the house, the building whose tower has a great copper ball on the top of it? Part of that building is the museum; the other part is the Protestant church. Most of my servants are Protestants, and there is service in the church occasionally. You shall worship there, if you like, on Sunday. We'll content ourselves with the museum now." The museum was reached. The door, however, happened to be locked; so the two friends contented themselves with climbing the hill behind it and inspecting the remains of an abbey with an almost perfect chapel, till the light began to fail, and the clanging of a bell roused them. "Hark!" said Glanville; "that means we must dress. By this time my palate is getting back its fastidiousness."

Alistair Seaton, whose habitual fare was simple, but who had nevertheless a homely fastidiousness of his own, was divided at dinner between wonder at the delicacy of his friend's repast and reflections that his friend, though he criticised every dish, and detected minute faults in what most men would have thought perfection, could breakfast off hard bacon with a better grace than himself. "I little thought," he said, looking up from a pear which had touched his tongue with its flavour, as though it were melting snow—"I little thought at breakfast that we should be ending the day like this, with silver plates and quails, and a *soufflé* worthy of Bignon's."

There was in his voice the half-ironical protest which certain natures, by no means indifferent to comfort, are apt to make against anything suggestive of deliberate luxury.

"My dear philosopher," said Glanville, "if circumstances mortify the flesh for me, I cheat the

infliction by accepting it as a matter of course and forgetting it; but to mortify the flesh unnecessarily is to irritate, not subdue it; and nothing can put the spirit in a position more absurd than that does. I think that by this time we're at peace with our nervous systems. If you'll have no more wine, we'll go outside for our coffee."

Outside coffee and cigars were waiting for them. The moon was slowly rising. The orange trees were dimly visible. Vases, columns, and cornices glimmered like dreams of Italy; spires of Irish yews had a semblance of distant cypresses; and up through the balustrades of the terrace came the rustle of the Atlantic sea.

The two friends, tired out with their journey, lay back in cane chairs, whilst the air stirred just sufficiently to tell them of its warmth and softness; and their minds were invaded by a pleasing sense of the contrast between the exotic refinement amongst which their day was closing and the provinces of moor and mountain which divided them from their lives of yesterday.

At length, after a long silence, Rupert Glanville spoke.

"We couldn't," he said, "have better coffee, and we couldn't have dined better in London. We have taken the spoils of Egypt with us, but we have left its bondage behind us. I enjoy this rest and quiet as a man whose head is aching enjoys the experience of laying it on a cool pillow."

"Nobody would take you," said Seaton, "for a man whose head ached with anything. I've always looked on you as the type of natural health and happiness."

"Yes," replied Glanville, "the fairies have dealt

well with me. My health is perfect ; my spirits are obstinately buoyant. But nevertheless, Alistair, ever since I knew you I've suffered in secret from a malady that never leaves me. You needn't stare and put on that look of annoyed sympathy. I'm not going to tell you I've a cancer under my waistcoat. The malady from which I suffer is mental ; so lean back, do, and be at ease again. It is merely the malady of the age. Our young lady had a touch of it—our beautiful young lady at the station. She told me as much while I was brushing your crumbs off her tablecloth."

"And what," asked Seaton, "according to you, is its nature?"

"My own diagnosis of it," Glanville replied, "is this. The only life which can reasonably satisfy anybody is made up of two parts—the intellectual part and the part which we vaguely call religious. When the mind is healthy these two parts are in agreement and support each other. Now they are at daggers drawn. Each snatches away, or contaminates, the food that the other feeds on."

"I never," began Seaton, "I never thought that you——"

"You never thought," interrupted Glanville, "that there was in me much religion of any kind. Yes, yes, I know that. But I take religion in a deeper sense than you do. The opposition between religion and the intellect does not express itself only in saying that a God exists, and in saying that a God does not—in wishing to say prayers, and in thinking it silly to say them. It expresses itself also in two hostile ejaculations—which sum up for the sick mind its experiences of every day: 'How full life is !' and, 'How empty !' You used to tell me at

Oxford, when you laughed at me as a dilettante sceptic, that the cure for doubt is action. The saying is Goethe's, but it's nonsense all the same. I've been, since those days, a man of action myself."

"You have," said Seaton, raising himself in his chair abruptly, "and if you think that what you have done is empty, this is only because you are too modest. I doubt if you realise the importance of the part you played—of the help which you, with your coolness, knowledge, and determination, gave your country in its days of struggle and difficulty."

"I suppose," said Glanville, "you mean during the late war. I worked for my country's greatness. Yes, I worked with enthusiasm. I felt, when I thought of it, the muscles of my mind harden. I've something of the fighter in my blood, as well as something of the thinker in my brain. But even during that time of struggle my mind was constantly whispering that now the struggle is over it insists on saying out loud: What was the struggle worth? What was its object? Nothing. The question of empires—shall this one grow or shall that one?—is merely a question of which kind of scum or weed shall grow over half or a quarter of a dirty and paltry pond."

"I doubt," said Seaton, "if you laugh at things quite as completely as you think you do. On your own confession, you don't laugh at the protest which part of your nature makes against the lectures delivered to it by another part."

"Precisely," said Glanville. "That's the heart of the whole situation. We can't accept this philosophy; yet the intellect is unable to refute it. Everybody to-day is conscious of the same difficulty, clearly or vaguely. Our religious and moral philo-

sophers talk about little else. But these good people—theologians, idealists, materialists—they all do the same thing. They shy at it—they jib—they shirk it. They none of them have the courage to meet it. The religious thinkers shirk the logic of denial. With an equally dogged cowardice the irreligious thinkers shirk its consequences. My own wish is to look the difficulty straight in the face—to peer into its eyes, even though they were the Gorgon's. Yes, my dear Alistair, though I see you smile in the darkness, I longed to do this, through all my years of office, only I couldn't—any more than an archbishop could scratch his leg at a coronation. But at last I am my own man again, for a little while at all events; and I have come here—here to this place of secluded leisure—and I have seduced you also into coming with me, that we may meet the enemy undisturbed, and see what we can manage to do with him. To-morrow, while we are still alone, we'll have a preliminary skirmish."

"Why do you say, 'We shall be still alone'?" asked Seaton.

"Because," replied Glanville, laughing, "I did not tell you before—if I had you wouldn't have come here—because to-morrow evening I'm expecting a few people."

"What!" exclaimed Seaton, with genuine mortification in his voice. "You are going to have people here—a smart party from London! Rupert, you're a dishonest person, You ask me to share a hovel with you, and you put me into a palace. You ask me to share your seclusion with you, and you're going to distract me with society. When these people of yours come, there'll be an end of all our talk."

"On the contrary," said Glanville, smiling at his

friend's discomfiture, "when they call, there will be a new beginning of it. And now to compose you, as soon as you go to bed, will you let me give you a chapter of my own autobiography, which will show you how the malady of the age gradually affected myself? It is not long, and is eminently unsentimental."

Before they mounted the stairs through the whispering silence of the house, Rupert Glanville put into his friend's hands, together with a candlestick and a pair of old silver snuffers, a typewritten document, consisting of a few pages.

CHAPTER IV

ALISTAIR SEATON woke betimes next morning with a pleasant sensation of oddly compounded luxury. Sunlight was flooding the room through blinds which fluttered softly, and showed in wavering shadows the bars of half-opened windows. Above him was the domed canopy of a gilded Italian bedstead. His body lay in linen which smelt of lavender; and along with the sunlight, came from the air outside a splashing sound of waves, and the freshness of new-mown grass. He lazily looked round him. On the walls were pictures of Naples, painted in faded water-colours. Chests of drawers and cabinets, in fine Japanese lacquer, which had swallowed up his wardrobe of rough Scotch homespun, blinked at him. He reflected on where he was—in what a singular and unexpected retreat—once again alone with his old friend, from whom by the chances of life he had been separated for several years, and who now was one of the most fortunate and successful men of his time. His spirits rose, and filled him with a sense of holiday. Presently moving his hand, he felt something notch the bedclothes. It was the leaves of his friend's manuscript, which he had till now forgotten, and which, the night before,

he had been too sleepy to read. He took it up, and found it to be as follows :—

“ An Example of the Effects produced on Personal Character by a Gradual Assimilation of our Modern Knowledge of The Universe.

“ In dealing with my life, as I here propose to do, except for the fact that I have an internal knowledge of it, I hardly recognise it as my own. I see it merely as an example, brought directly under my own vision, of the nature which a human being brings with it into the world, and the changes produced in it, on the one hand, by the principles of its own growth, and a definite set of external circumstances on the other.

“ The external circumstances which I here have in view, and which really are my sole concern in this short and bald memorandum, are of a very limited kind. They are purely intellectual. They consist of those changes in our knowledge and conception of the Universe (man himself being included in it) which are daily distinguishing more and more clearly modern mental conditions from those of all previous ages. I shall deal with my own nature, as submitted to these circumstances and affected by them, just as I might deal with some species of potato, or vine, transplanted into a new climate or treated with some new manure.

“ For this purpose I must say something of my congenital character, in order to show that I began as a healthy and normal specimen ; and that my case is, for that reason, an instructive subject of observation.

“ My disposition in childhood was happy, and exceptionally active. As soon as I could spell I

became a voracious reader. I loved my pony almost as well as my books: and I dreamed of the glorious day when I should first kill birds with a gun. Furthermore, though by no means what nurses call good, by instinct I was strongly religious. God and Christ were as real to me as the nursery windows, and I said my prayers as beautifully as an infant Samuel.

"What followed was perfectly normal. I made an excellent schoolboy, and though I despised mere games, I played them, and played them well, so that nobody should despise *me*. When the pulses of manhood began beating in the boy's veins, matters proceeded still in accordance with the happiest precedents. My religious convictions grew deeper, and acquired a wider scope, by association with a sense of the poetry and romance of life. This change was stimulated, during the year of my first tail-coat, by a profound but unfortunate passion for a dark-eyed widow of forty, which drove me into waste places at the far end of the shrubbery, and put me on intimate terms with the stars, the sea, and the sunsets. Other developments followed in quick succession. Sublime ambitions of all kinds began to form themselves in my mind. I burned to be supreme as a poet, a soldier, a statesman, and once, I think, as a rider of steeplechases; and in each capacity I rewarded myself with the devotion of some ideal woman, and endowed myself with the enthusiasm of a knight in quest of the Holy Grail. In every direction the world revealed vistas to me reaching away into regions full of sublime possibilities and ending in a world beyond.

"Such was my condition at the time of my going to Oxford, when the first change in it, of which I was

conscious, began. The change, however unsuspected by myself, had been initiated long before.

“Like most children of my own class and generation, I was brought up as a member of the English Church, or rather of that Church within a Church—the moderate High Church party—and till I was twenty, I no more doubted what it taught me as to man, his origin, and his destiny, than I doubted the existence of the sky. Still, even under these circumstances, such knowledge and intellect as I possessed had already made themselves felt as unrecognised opponents of my orthodoxy, in the form of an instinctive contempt for nearly all the controversial arguments which I heard in my devout boyhood enunciated from Anglican pulpits. The moral appeals of the preachers used often to touch me deeply, but if I had been in search of a serious intellectual guide, I would have gone, in preference to them, to the clown at the nearest circus.

“At Oxford the new influences to which I was submitted were these. Firstly, there was that of the Broad Church system of theology, amongst the professors of which the head of my college was eminent. Secondly, there was that of the current philosophies of history, which exhibited Christianity as one of many religious systems all equally dependent on some complex of historical circumstances; whilst during my vacations there soon began to be a third. This was the influence of the leaders of contemporary science, whose acquaintance I made at the house of one of my uncles, and whose views and conversation at once fascinated and repelled me.

“In the chapel of my college and in the lecture-room of my college tutors I learned that the Bible

was a volume as human in its origin as the Koran : that Adam was a myth, that Genesis was a compilation of legends, and that the Prophets were merely the Emersons and Carlyles of their day ; whilst the Gospels sank to the level of imperfect and fragmentary memoirs, abounding in errors as to fact and embroidered with pious fancies. In a word, the religion which I had hitherto, without hesitation, assumed to be divinely revealed, and true in every one of its doctrines, was now presented to me as merely a great historical movement, which being now spent, was gradually giving place to some other, and transmitting to it, what seemed to me little more than a name.

“ Meanwhile the scientific thinkers who frequented my uncle’s house made me familiar with another order of facts which the divines and philosophers of my college, with bland smiles, and little twittering voices, acknowledged indeed in a general way, but the meaning of which they never realised, because, in matters of science, the best of them were no better than dunces. These facts were the immensity and apparent eternity of the Universe, the shortness of the period covered by human history compared with the ages for which man has existed, and the length of this last when compared with the few thousand years to which the orthodox Christian story of the Fall and the Redemption had confined it. And to these must be added another—which my new friends declared to be indubitable—the association of all life with its exact organic equivalents, and its invariable disturbance or extinction when the organism is dissolved or injured. From these facts, as I was not slow to see, two conclusions followed ; and the men of science had no hesitation in drawing

them. One was that God—if such a name were permissible—was merely the impersonal sum of the forces and uniformities of the Universe; and the other was that men, no less than pigs and potatoes, came into life with their bodies, and died for ever with the death of them.

“These new teachings, both of Broad Church Christianity and science, though they shocked me at first, and struck me for a time as ridiculous, I gradually learnt to accept, if not as entirely true, as at all events supported by facts which it was impossible to forget or to disregard. Facts, however, are like food. They require to be digested before they can affect the system: and in my own case the digestive process was retarded by the following cause.

“The Broad Church divines continued to call themselves Christian priests, to administer the sacraments, and solemnly to recite the creeds, though according to their own principles there was no efficacy in the one, and very few articles that were not false in the other. In the same way the men of science, though denying both God and the soul, professed themselves impassioned supporters of the moral code of Christ. They said, with Professor Huxley, that this ‘was surely indisputable’; and somehow contrived to unite in their own persons the principles of the Hell Fire Club with the prejudices of the Methodist pulpit. Their conduct in these respects seemed to me so much more fatuous than anything which the orthodox clergy had ever given me to smile at, that I only knew my old faith to have been assailed, from the fact I found myself clinging to it with a heightened rather than a diminished fervour. Indeed, I tightened my hold on this rock

for a reason of which I was not then conscious—that little by little I felt myself slipping away from it.

“Such, indeed, was actually my condition. In spite of the tenacity with which I clung to what still seemed to me the solid common sense of religion, the historical and scientific facts which I was utterly unable to doubt, and the principles of free criticism which I was utterly unable to reject, became every day of the week more and more familiar to me; and every Sunday the orthodoxy of the High Church preachers rang in my ears more hollow and more perversely futile. They might as well have been talking about Jupiter, or expounding the Ptolemaic astronomy. When I had been at Oxford for about a year and a half the Sunday came on which I knelt for the last time at their altar. I felt that the faith of my fathers had fallen in ruins about me, unroofed and dilapidated by the pitiless hands of knowledge, whose action I deplored, but could neither resent nor condemn.

“Nothing, however, had gone but my belief in one special revelation. God and the immortal soul were realities for me as much as they ever were; and I presently found consolation in a kind of mystical theism, of which orthodox Christianity was merely a worn-out symbol.

“This condition of mine, while it lasted, was far from unsatisfactory. It gave me, indeed, a secret sense of pleasing spiritual superiority. But before very long my previous experience repeated itself; and while I thought myself secure in the possession of my fine new creed, it was all the while being destroyed by a series of subconscious processes. These did not consist in the acquisition of any new

ideas, but merely in the mental digestion of what I had taken into my system already. The first of the ideas which thus became part of myself was the idea of the magnitude of the Universe, and the littleness and the evanescence of man. It became my constant companion—my familiar demon. The seas became puddles; the continents paltry parishes; the houses cardboard toys; the men microscopic dolls; humanity a passing rash on the surface of a dissolving pilule. In order to attribute any serious importance to the destinies of so puny a race, I felt that it was necessary to credit human existence with some other dimensions than those which were all that science could perceive in it; and I thus began to feel the importance of some belief that was trans-scientific, not perhaps more poignantly than I had ever felt it before, but in a totally novel and much more comprehensive way. I felt it to be essential not to religion only, but to everything in life that was beautiful, grand, or stimulating. I felt that the want of it made love, ambition, and poetry as meaningless as it made prayer, and robbed of their inmost quality not the saint's face only, but the scent of the rose, and the blueness of the summer sea.

“But just as the heightened vehemence of my late adherence to orthodoxy had been accompanied and caused by a sense that my faith was slipping away from me, so was this enlarged consciousness of the importance of religion of some sort—of its great mundane functions—accompanied by a growing conviction that the very essence of all religion was a dream—that it had nothing external in the scheme of things to correspond to it. Day by day I began to perceive more clearly that, in spite of all errors

and all gaps in detail, the scientific interpretation of the Universe was indubitably true as a whole ; that it was drawing all the phenomena—living or lifeless—of existence, into its single net of steel ; and the matter was summed up for me in two overwhelming conclusions, which were only attested afresh by each fresh attempt to discredit them. One was that the origin and the end of all living things—plants and animals—is the same. The other was that of all, the common origin is the cell ; and the common end death. These two conclusions advanced upon me like a creeping tide, masking its rise in retreats, but still steadily rising, and engulfing my faith, now structureless, as though it were a castle of sand.

“When I first realised clearly that such was indeed the case, I experienced no feelings of picturesque and sentimental regret. I felt like a man whose fortune was in bank-notes, and who woke up one morning to discover that they all were forgeries. I was like a living man stupefied by finding himself in a city of the dead ; and I passed through a period during which, had I listened to reason only, I might actually have put an end to my existence.

“I was withheld from this course, however, by something stronger than reason. This something was my temperament. Sanguine and elastic as it was, though it did not in any way arrest the destructive operations of my reason, it little by little assuaged the pain they inflicted on me, and enabled me to laugh again in a blighted and disenchanted world, as Christopher Sly no doubt did, when he sank back into a tinker. I despised life, but it was tolerable—sometimes pleasant and even exciting, and it was nearly always ridiculous.

“Suddenly, when I was in this condition, I became the plaything of a new vicissitude. I found myself taken off my feet by a genuine passion for a woman. Everything that love-poets have described astounded me by taking place in myself. The sense that another life, with a pair of incomparable eyes, was devoting itself to me in a passion of sacramental constancy, made me feel as though for me and her the heaven of heavens was opened; the entire Universe was transfigured; the mystery of things was restored to them; and when the object of my affections, as I was then nothing more than a younger son, transferred her own to the heir of a large but encumbered property, my renewed religious convictions became yet more alive and active. Nothing less than a world of infinite moral issues could, I felt, afford scope for a tragedy so tremendous as this—that a young lady who had been pouring into mine the whole treasures of her priceless soul should actually begin to lavish the very same treasures upon a brute, which was, at that time, my synonym for any man who was not myself. The difference between goodness and badness seemed more appalling to me than ever; and I set myself to write a book in which, accepting this difference as infinite, I sought to show that the only possible explanation of it was to be found in the immortality of the soul, and its debt to a Divine Creator. I thus tried to effect a re-conversion of myself, and to push myself back by reason into the beliefs which it had pushed me out of.

“The success of my attempt did not equal my expectations. The reason of this lay in the instability of my major premiss, or the fulcrum of my argumentative lever. In other words, my new sense

of the importance of life, as illustrated by the infinite wickedness of inconstancy in a beautiful woman, tended to give way under the augmentative strain I was putting on it. It was saved, however, from total collapse by two events, which relieved the strain for a time by removing my hand from the lever.

"These were the deaths, first, of my elder brother, and again, later, of my father. I was thus placed in a practically new position. When my brother died I was at Rome, attached to the British Embassy; but political events at home had begun to attract my attention; and I willingly, at my father's suggestion, abandoned diplomacy for Parliament. I succeeded beyond my hopes. The difficulties of my party for many years at home, and then for some years abroad, roused me to efforts which were, at all events, honest and unremitting; and they brought me at last to the forefront of public life.

"Under such circumstances the latent malady of my mind gave me less pain than before, because I had less time to attend to it. It still, however, remained with me; and in the midst of my absorbing activities, and the frequent elations of success, a monitor in my mind was ever ready to whisper to me, 'All effort is vain. There is no meaning in anything.' As time went on, the whisper grew daily louder. In my public life I felt myself an actor before painted canvas, and behind this canvas was nothing but death and darkness. The good of my country—goodness in the character of the individual—I was sensitive still to these, but my sensitiveness was skin-deep only. My inward self appeared to have lost all feeling, as though my malady was ending in a sort of mortification of my

soul, or as though I was going back to the protoplasm out of which my race had emerged.

“My worst symptom was that this state of things had ceased to shock me, but it caused me nevertheless a constant dull uneasiness; and by-and-by, in my leisure moments, when I was alone, I was driven back again to the source in which my malady originated—the spectacle of life and the Universe, as science has laid them bare for us. And then gradually a new thought possessed me. This was not the littleness of man’s life, but the necessity of all its processes. Not only was his personal existence swallowed up in the flux of things, but his will was swallowed up in their uniformity. Of the trinity of denials—there is no God, there is no soul, there is no will—it seemed to me now that the third person was revealed to me—an unholy spirit that made my body its temple. This thought made every moment a moral death, without there being any need for me to anticipate the final moment of dissolution. Could this view of existence, which was thus forced on me, be true? Were the thoughts, the feelings, the aspirations, the seeming efforts of man, nothing but the passive dance of motes in a passing sunbeam? From this blighting conclusion was there no way of escape? In the presence of such questions, the squabbles of nations, the re-drainage of towns, the claims of Ireland to a parliamentary bear-garden of its own, proposals to teach the brats in the London slums the languages used by the brats in the slums of Berlin and Paris—began to irritate me like the buzzings and the bites of flies; and I determined that I would, as soon as an opportunity offered, retire from public life, not altogether, but for a time, in

order that I might try once more to balance my account with realities.

"I seem, as I write this, to see the solemn faces, and hear the solemn words, with which, if they came to read it, many saintly and spiritual persons would reprove me, castigate me, and endeavour to put me in the right way. They would speak to me of the beauty of holiness, of the illuminating love of Christ, and would probably hint to me—as in such cases they usually do—that my difficulties are mainly due to the love of self, or to what they call passion or concupiscence. How utterly these people miss the nature of the problem they are dealing with! It is no doubt true that if a man wishes to break some Christian precept, he will naturally incline to lend a friendly ear to any argument which may discredit the Christian idea of virtue. But I have no wish to break any such precept myself, which I would not gladly sacrifice if only I could be shown how the precept belonged to a system which it was possible for me to believe seriously. To such inept persons my one answer would be this. The beauty of goodness, as you yourselves perceive it, and the poignancy of the appeal made by it to a portion of man's nature, I acknowledge as fully as you, my good men, yourselves do. But the value which you attach to this appeal and this beauty is not a matter of personal feeling only. As you yourselves insist, it implies certain definite beliefs with regard to objective facts, such as the free, the spiritual, and the undying nature of man, and the personal goodness of the supreme power of the Universe, man being the unique object of it. If, for any reason, we cannot assent to these beliefs, the personal feeling in question sinks to a sublime

delusion, which will have to be dismissed as such ; and what I demand of you, and what the world demands also, is that these beliefs should be harmonised with beliefs of another kind—beliefs which have to do with objective facts also—which our modern study of the Universe is forcing on all civilised nations—which only the mad can doubt, and which only the dishonest can disregard. We demand of you that you should harmonise your conception of the all-wise, all-loving God, who is consumed by a desire for the salvation of the lowliest human soul, with the spectacle which now confronts us of the apathetic process of nature. If, as you are accustomed to say in your pulpits and elsewhere, only selfishness and concupiscence make it difficult for us intellectually to reconcile these two orders of facts, this, perhaps, may explain my own inability to reconcile them—a poor mundane sinner like me ; but it cannot explain any similar inability in you. If the reconciliation is possible, come down from your pulpits and give it to us. But if you cannot, do not make yourselves ludicrous by telling other men that all their intellectual difficulties in the way of a belief in the Fall, in the reality of God's covenant with Abraham, in the struggle for existence as a symbol of God's universal affection, or in the earthquake of Lisbon as an example of His exquisitely discriminating justice, are due to the fact that this man doesn't love his neighbour enough, or that that man is determined to love his neighbour's wife too much. My dear good saints—my modern men of religion—don't be offended with me. I am not fighting against you—my wish is to do something *for* you which you can't do for yourselves. So far as you are concerned, the

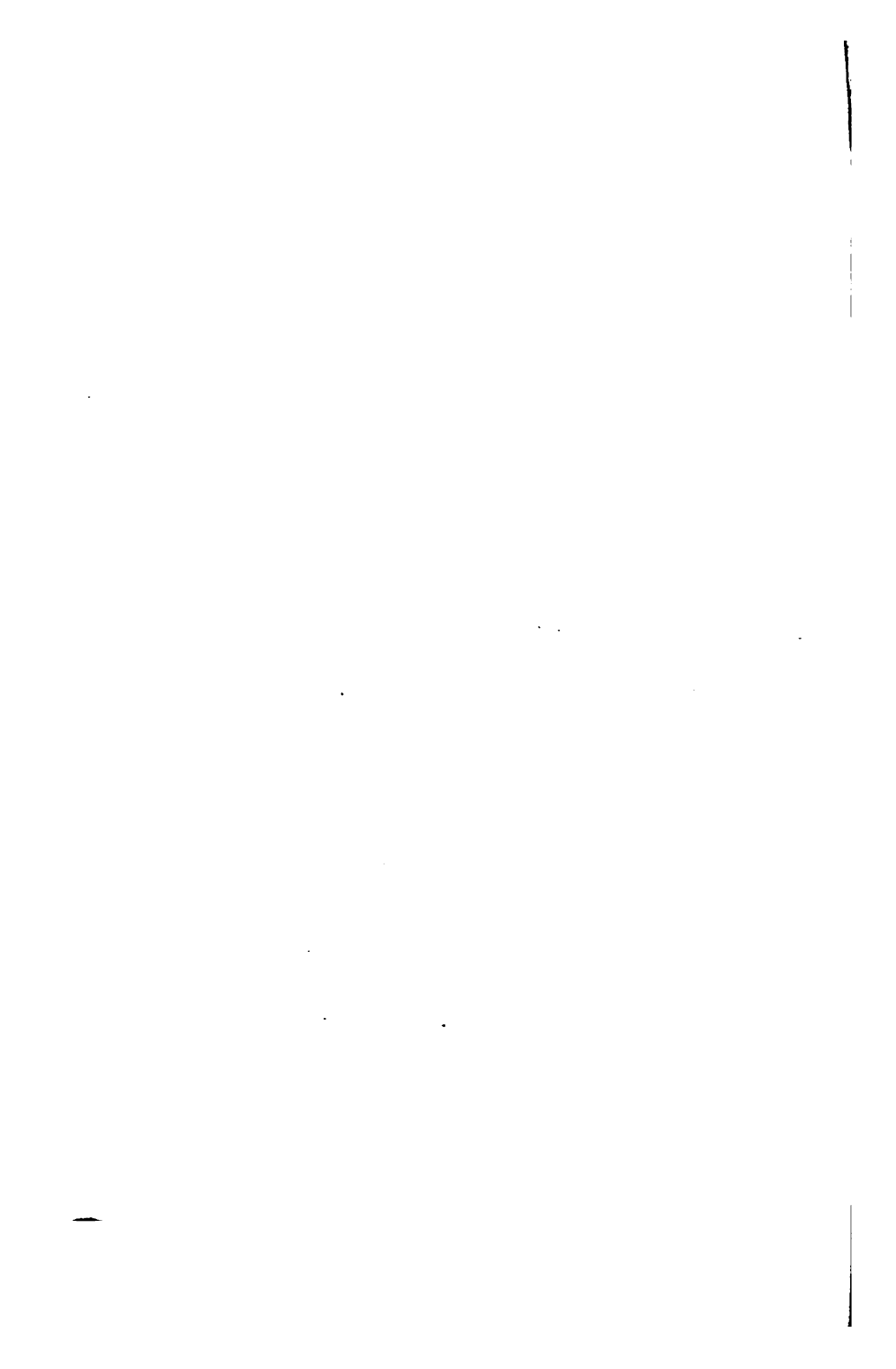
50 THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE [BK. I

Delphic Temple is roofless, the oracle is dumb, the prophetic laurel flowers not, and the talking waters have ceased.

“Poor dumb oracles, could you only do what we ask of you, you would be giving us back again, not religion only, but life.”

BOOK II

THEOLOGIANS IN DISGUISE



CHAPTER I

THE only son of a well-connected Writer to the Signet, Alistair Seaton had been left early in life to the care of a widowed mother—a model of Presbyterian goodness. This excellent lady had kept her treasure at home in her comfortable house in Edinburgh, where he was educated first by tutors, who were preparing for the ministry of the Kirk, and then by an ex-professor of transcendental metaphysics from Glasgow, whose health had broken down under the strain of contemplating existence as a modification, by his own mind, of the Absolute. The solemn demeanour of this shaggy and devout sage, his manner of saying “Good morning,” as though it were part of the Shorter Catechism, his woollen gloves, and the strength of his Scotch accent, seemed to Mrs. Seaton proofs of his old-fashioned Christian orthodoxy. She little dreamed that her son, whose singing of the New Paraphrase made him seem as close to her heart as Augustine was to Monica’s, was preparing to edify the dons in his earliest college essay by telling them that the Christian Trinity was merely a crude expression of the sublime truth that the Father is pure unconditioned Abstraction; that the so-called Son is Abstraction made real by self-negation; and that the so-called Spirit is

Negation again negated, which manages thus to make itself the perfect Sum-total of existence.

But the young undergraduate, who for a time was bursting with these secrets, gradually grew tired of keeping his thoughts tortured into the one gymnastic attitude which enabled him to receive their consolations; and he presently forgot the Absolute in an enthusiasm for religious Art, which he found to be a better language for the unextinguished piety of his nature. Subsequently, on the death of a cousin to whom he was engaged to be married, and to whose memory he was inviolably constant, he retired with his mother to a cottage in North Wales, where he taught the principles of art and the practice of carving to the villagers, and joined in his mother's devotions with so much filial sympathy that he sometimes could hardly tell how his own creed differed from hers.

His friend's document, therefore, with its dry and methodical references to modes of thought and aspects of things which he had himself disregarded, and its traces of levity in certain of its most serious passages, left him, when he had done reading it, in a condition of surprise rather than of comprehension. He looked round him again at the bedroom, and the gilded bed-posts; and contrasting his friend's description of his dissatisfaction with life with the delicate appreciation shown by him of all the arts of living, he was tempted to ask himself once more whether, with a man like Glanville, such speculative dissatisfaction was really more than a plaything. These reflections were interrupted, and, at the same time, seemed to him justified, by the sound of his own name rising to him through an open window, and by Glanville's

voice below, calling to him to come down and bathe.

Seaton, who was a fine swimmer, leaped at once from his bed; and he and Glanville, not many minutes later, were hurrying through the gardens to the bathing-place, which proved to be a romantic cavern, full of the moving lights and sobbings of the salt and glaucous water. They returned to their clothes glowing with health and exercise; and as they made their way back to the house over rocks from which the waves had retreated, Seaton observed, with an almost boyish interest, one of its architectural features whose existence he had not suspected. He saw that the terrace, on which the windows of the living-rooms opened, and whose line of balustrades and orange trees had a length of some thousand feet, was really the roof of a pillared and arcaded building, whose base was but little above the level of high tide. Glanville explained to him that this imposing structure was the orangery, designed by the Bishop as a place for exercise in wet weather. "I," he continued, "have put it to a different purpose, which perhaps would have scandalised even the scandalous prelate himself. I'll show you its secrets at a more convenient season. And now for breakfast. It will be ready as soon as you are."

The freshness of their appetites and the excellence of the meal that was awaiting them sustained and even heightened the spirits of the two friends; and as Glanville's conversation wandered from topic to topic, touching now on his excavations in the East, now on his travels in Europe, Seaton felt as if he, too, who he had chosen quiet as his portion, was enjoying the thrill of action, change, and experience. "The worst of it is," said Glanville, when by-and-

by in the library they sank into two armchairs, with a box of cigars between them, "we can't be in two moods and in two places at once. To explore one ruined city you must forego the sight of a hundred ; and the more you appreciate the pleasure of being in love with one woman, the more you realise the impossibility of being equally in love with a dozen."

"How like you are," exclaimed Seaton, "to the *you* I have always known, and how unlike something else, whose acquaintance I made this morning ! I mean the disillusioned *you* you have exhibited in your own analysis."

"And so," said Glanville, laughing, "you didn't think the portrait like me?"

"It seems to me," said Seaton, "not a portrait at all. Nearly everything that is peculiar to yourself—yourself as I see you there laughing and talking—is left out of it."

"You have paid my memorandum," said Glanville, "the highest of possible compliments. To leave out everything peculiar to myself was my aim, and merely to give what was typical of the course of a certain disease from which I happened to be suffering in common with most of my contemporaries. If you wished to describe influenza from your own experiences of it, you wouldn't interlard your account with your private views about Hegel."

"Well," replied Seaton, "what you say makes it easier for me to discuss your paper. If you wish me to take it as illustrating certain general facts and tendencies, I personally should venture to find two faults with it. May I tell you what they are?"

"By all means," said Glanville. "It's the very thing that I want you to do."

"I differ from you," said Seaton, "in the first

place, as to your view that the world generally has become, or is even tending to become, less religious than it used to be. All the social movements of the modern world are religious. They arise from a sense of the spiritual dignity of man—of the equal relation of all men to a Mind that is beyond them all."

"My own impression, then," said Glanville, "which is certainly shared by many, that modern scientific knowledge is drying up faith at its sources, seems to you an hallucination."

"I confess," said Seaton, "it seems to me a groundless alarm. You are frightened—I don't say by nothing—but by a windmill which you take for a giant. I can best show you what I mean by telling you quite plainly the second fault which I find with your whole position. You talk of our modern scientific knowledge of the Universe. Much of it, very likely, is new and true and useful; but it all seems to me, on account of its very nature, to be so far less important than it evidently seems to you. You speak of it as of something which stands on some new basis of its own, distinct from all other and deeper knowledge, and opposed to it."

"I should say rather," replied Glanville, "that instead of opposing all other knowledge, it absorbs it, as a snake swallows a rabbit, and makes it, by digesting it, part of a different body."

"Here," said Seaton, "we come to the root of our difference. I say it does nothing of the kind. What are the hollow facts of mere physical science when interpreted by chemists and naturalists, who don't know the rudiments of philosophy? You, my dear Rupert, and those who share your fears, seem to forget that the objects which physical science

studies—stars, stomachs, grey brain-pulp, or steam engines—would for us be nothing if it were not for the antecedent mind. They are understandable only because an antecedent mind understands them.”

“And what conclusion,” said Glanville, “do you draw from this simple proposition?”

“That we must interpret the Universe through the mind,” replied Seaton, “not the mind through the Universe; and the Universe, if we treat it in this way, will no longer be a bugbear to us. Science may cut up a brain; it may measure the distance of a star; but it stops dead before a living human thought.”

For a moment Glanville was silent. Then he got up impatiently, and began pacing the room. Finally, with his back against the chimney-piece, he looked at his friend, and addressed him.

“Alistair,” he said, “I should like to throw all Hegel’s books at your head. You are talking as if you were not only Hegel’s disciple, but his contemporary—as though since his death no one had learnt anything. You do talk like that. Sit quiet, and I’ll show you how. Be patient with me for five minutes. Of science in Hegel’s day, what you say may be true enough. Science, then, we may admit, stopped short at the living mind. But, thanks to God or the devil, we have travelled far since then. Science began—as any board-school teacher knows—with a study of the stars and the physics of the inorganic world. There seemed to be little connection between our sacred minds and these. Then it went on to the organisms of plants and animals, venturing, with many elaborate apologies to the deity, to include amongst these last the vile body of man. Throughout all these organisms, in exact

proportion as it studied them, it discovered a growing amount of likeness, and of mechanical and machine-like uniformity. But still, till a long time after Hegel's death, these groups of machine-like processes, these separate living species, seemed radically separated from one another, and connected only as contrivances of the same deity. Thus the different kinds of life—in especial the life of man—seemed to stand up alone above the waters of science, like island peaks above the sea, the objects of a separate knowledge. But all this while the waters of science were rising slowly like a flood, and were signalling their rise by engulfing from time to time some stake or landmark that a moment before was protruding from them, or by suddenly pouring over a barrier and submerging some new area. No doubt even by this process many people were frightened; but there was no more general panic than there was in the days of Noah. Men, from their superior station, watched the tide in security. They ate and drank at their old sacramental altars. They were married before them, and given in marriage. But one fine day—as we look back at it it seems the work of a moment—something happened which, as I often amuse myself by thinking, would have been for a trans-human spectator the finest stage-effect in the world. The gradual rise of the waters gave place to a cataclysm. The fountains of the great deep were broken up when Darwin struck the rock; and an enormous wave washed over the body of man, covering him up to his chin, leaving only his head visible, whilst his limbs jostled below with the carcasses of the drowned animals. His head, however, was visible still, and in his head was his mind—that mind ante-

cedent to the Universe—that redoubtable separate entity—staring out of his eyes over the deluge like a sailor on a sinking ship. And then came one crisis more. The waters rose an inch or two higher; and all at once, like a sponge, the substance of his head itself had begun to suck them up—suck them up into the very home of life and thought; and the mind, sodden all through, was presently below the surface, sharing the doom of limpets and weeds and worlds. Or sometimes,” continued Glanville, “what has happened presents itself to me in this way. Did you ever read Southey’s Indian poem, ‘The Curse of Kehama’? And do you remember how the conquering Rajah, who has almost made himself a god, sees when he enters hell, so that hell too may acknowledge his majesty, a vacant place eminent amongst the places of the damned—how at last he becomes aware that this place is destined for himself, and how his brethren in perdition break out in chorus, and call on him to join their number? In the temple, or the hell of science, to which the things of life and nature have one after one been brought, and where they have been bound in the fetters of the same mechanical necessity, I have often pictured to myself an eminent seat vacant, waiting in vain through the ages for some supreme and delaying occupant; and at last into the place of torment stalks man, with his dreams and his aspirations. This seat is for him, and hell beholds him take it, whilst the forms and the forces round him call, as in Southey’s poem—

“‘Come, come, Kehama, come—too long we wait for thee.’

There,” said Glanville, abruptly changing his tone, “you thought I was going to bless modern

knowledge, and, you see, I've ended by cursing it. At least I've shown you what it is. The old knowledge said, 'You must understand the Universe through the individual mind.' The new says, 'You must understand the individual mind through the Universe, out of whose common substance it is formed, and into whose common substance it goes back.' It would have been perfectly possible, in the days of Hegel, to dismiss the idea that this was so by every kind of intellectual argument. Now, by intellectual argument, it is impossible to cast a doubt on it."

"My dear Rupert," exclaimed Seaton, "you are a veritable Saul among the prophets. But all you have said just now I could put for you into Hegel's language; and you'd see that there's as fine a religion in it as any you believe yourself to have lost."

"Well," said Glanville, "you shall have your revenge by-and-by. You shall, if you like, preach your gospel to our friends this evening, and save a whole dinner-table instead of a single soul."

"Rupert," said Seaton solemnly, "damn your friends."

"Does that benediction," asked Glanville, "sum up what you wish your gospel to do for them?"

"It means," replied Seaton, "as I told you last night, that they'll interrupt all our talks. What do your friends—these ordinary people of the world—care for the things that you and I have been discussing?"

"In other words," said Glanville, "what do they care about religion? Why, my dear Alistair, you told me yourself just now that everybody cared about religion, with the exception of a small minority.

Why do you suppose that my friends belong all of them to that depraved body? On the contrary you'll discover that really they are so many theologians in disguise—although in the case of some of them I admit that the disguise is very good. However, you will be able to test what I say for yourself before many hours are over; and so, meanwhile, let us get off our high horse. I have a proposal to make to you. I think you're a good sailor. That stomach of yours, which is only real as related to your antecedent mind—would it annoy your mind by misbehaving itself on a steam launch?"

"Certainly not," replied Seaton. "I was never sea-sick in my life."

"Then we'll have the launch," said Glanville; "we'll take our lunch with us, and we'll go to Ballyfergus, the odd little watering-place which I mentioned to you, and of which I am the happy landlord. Religion will be rampant there in the persons of the orthodox clergy, and I want to present you, and also to present myself, to a very important person who is certainly not a clergyman."

CHAPTER II

THE weather remained beautiful; and the two friends on the launch, as they watched the lights which rose and fell like buoys on the glossy waters, let the webs of their late discussion be blown from them on the summer air. Only once, and for a few moments only, did their conversation, by accident, flow back into its former channel.

"Why is it," said Glanville, whose eyes had been fixed on the sea, watching the flight of the wheeling and dipping sea-gulls, "that the beauty of nature—even the movements of these birds which are going as Hermes did, when he went to Calypso's island, and felt the spray on his shoulders—why is it that these things rouse in us, as they do, irrational longings for something which we not only cannot seize, but cannot even define or imagine—something, my dear Alistair, which we seek alike in love, adventure, and music; which tantalises us in flowers, in the swaying shadows of cypresses, in musk, in incense, and the track of the marine moonlight, but which never gives itself to our arms, or fastens its lips to ours? Is it merely the longing, do you think, of our own physical organisms to return to the earth from which they were taken?"

"You have almost," said Seaton, "answered your own question yourself. This sense of the human

appeal and the poetical suggestion of nature—this longing for the sea, and yet not for the sea—for the mountains, and yet not for the mountains—is merely an illustration of the fact that the Universe is, as Hegel said and as I say, a thought of God, and that our own minds long for that rest in the perfection of the Divine Mind, which the ecstasy of the saint gives him for an illuminated moment, and which philosophy gives to the philosopher less completely, but for a life-time.”

“A delightful creed,” said Glanville, “though a touch will tear it to pieces. My fashionable friends will be charmed to have the whole matter out with you; though, if you put it like that to them, they might not know what you mean. Meanwhile we’ll come back to the facts of life, or what you would call its illusions. Turn round, and you’ll see the place to which I am going to take you.”

Seaton turned, and saw at the base of the mountains an irregular line of houses lying along a mile of beach. The curve of the land formed a fine natural harbour, in which were a number of fishing boats, and the whiteness of one great steam yacht. There was also a pier, which the launch was approaching rapidly, and up the steps of which the philosophers were soon climbing.

A season of some sort was evidently in full progress. The pier was dotted with idle and sauntering strangers—giggling groups of young ladies, children in canvas shoes, and florid, middle-aged men, their eyes full of golf and whiskey; whilst amongst all these, and forming a yet more remarkable feature, were numerous male figures, habited in unbroken black, with white specks at their throats, and hats of curious make, which seemed to enunciate, by their

several curves and textures, profound but conflicting convictions with regard to Christian theology. The bearing, the smiles, the frowns, and the whiskers of these reverend personages were even more various than their hats, and suggested the nature of their relations, not to the Church only, but to the world. Here came a row of three, swinging their sticks, and laughing; here a pair with severe professional mouths, absorbed in controversy, their eyes fixed on the ground; here a lath-like solitary, rapt in ascetic meditation; and here some fatherly pastor, accompanied by a wife and family, who formed in themselves a protest against the wickedness of sacerdotal detachment.

"Well," said Glanville to Seaton, "this, if nothing else, should convert me to your view that religion is as flourishing now as it ever was. Look, do you see those placards?"

"Which?" said Seaton. "Do you mean 'Congregational Prayers for Rain'?"

"No," replied Glanville. "The next placard: 'Conferences on Religion and Science.' Let us examine it. The conferences are to be held in the hall of the Clerical Hotel. That's just as it should be. The hotel is on my property. 'Clergy and others of all denominations invited.' And now," he continued, "what are the subjects? 'Conference I.: Ways to Faith—The Old Way the Only Way; Opening Address by the Rev. Wilfred Maxwell. Conference II.: The Truth of Genesis attested by Evolutionary Science. Conference III.: The Witness of Science to the Miraculous Origin of Life. Conference IV.: The Downfall of Darwinism. Conference V.: Miracles as a Spiritual Symbolism. Conference VI.: The Historical Reality of God's

Covenant with Abraham as the Starting-point of the Christian Faith. Conference VII. : The Mind of the Church ; an Address on this subject will be given by the Right Rev. The Bishop of Glastonbury.' ”

But his reading was here interrupted by the sound of his own name, which a voice at his elbow was pronouncing in accents of deferential pleasure ; and the next moment he was grasping with friendly recognition the hand of an elderly cleric, of chastened but not unprosperous aspect, whose slight stoop and whose somewhat plaintive intonation had an air of being due to the fact that it was incumbent on a Christian to mourn rather than to the fact that he had personally much to mourn about. It appeared that he was one of the people on whom Glanville was going to call, with a view, it appeared farther, to settling some practical point with him ; for the two were presently conversing in a business-like and confidential undertone. “ Surely,” said the clergyman at last, “ I’ve no other engagement. If you want me, I doubt not you’ll just send me a telegram, and the excursion in your beautiful launch would be in itself a pleasure. I think,” he went on, with a slight wave of the hand, “ you must know Canon Morgan. He and I were at Cambridge together. I believe that since then we had hardly met till yesterday.”

Glanville was now aware of another clerical personage, who had indeed been walking with the speaker, but whom he had not previously noticed. This gentleman had none of his friend’s melancholy. He wore his clerical clothes with an easy, fashionable negligence ; an expensive gold cross and pencil-case dangled together amicably on his waistcoat, and his scholarly face had the smile of a prosperous

chairman about to announce to his shareholders a good spiritual dividend. He grasped Glanville's hand with almost superfluous warmth, and reminded him that they had last met at a garden party at Buckingham Palace. "London for me," he said, "after my late sermons in the Abbey—nothing takes it out of you like the pulpit, not even the House of Commons—London for me, was a little too much this summer: so my doctor—capital man—the King's man—has ordered me into retreat here. But," he continued, "there's no rest for the wicked. They've impressed me, even here, into the service. That's me," he said, drawing Glanville a little aside—'Miracles as a Spiritual Symbolism.' I wanted them to let me off with a short lecture on radium; but perhaps it's as well they wouldn't, since I find, as you no doubt know, we've the greatest scientific thinker of the age as our illustrious neighbour. Well, I can assure you we've an odd collection here—every crank who is anxious to patch up the old jewel-case, without giving a thought to the pearl of price contained in it. They are going to prove Genesis by Darwin, and knock down Darwin with Genesis. There goes a specimen. Look at him. He calls himself Father Skipton. I don't mind. It's better that this sort of thing should work itself out by exposing itself than that it should go on suppurating under the surface. You ought to come over when we are at work and hear us at it—hammer and tongs."

Glanville's answer to this was given in a subdued tone, which the Canon apparently saw no occasion to imitate. "Lady Snowdon and the Bishop!" he exclaimed. "Famous! Dear Lady Snowdon! What a keen-witted woman that is—hard as nails! What

would she think of this flummery? And the Bishop," he went on, slightly shrugging his shoulders, "it's not for me to speak evil of dignities, but, my dear Mr. Glanville, between you and me, a mitre in the English Church is apt to be to the intellect very much what an extinguisher is to a guttering tallow candle. Well, I mustn't keep you. I must resume my walk with my dear old Evangelical friend there. Good-bye; delighted to have met you. Magnificent yacht that. You know whose it is, I suppose. It's the *Phryne*—Sir Roderick Harborough's."

"Now, my dear Alistair," said Glanville, when once more they were alone together, "we'll go and see some other wonders. I didn't introduce you to those. I dare say you are grateful to me. The dear old gentleman who spoke to me first is Mr. Maxwell—a clergyman from County Down. He spends his summers here, and is good enough sometimes to come over and give us a service in my church. I was going to have called on him at his hotel. We needn't do so now. Instead, I will take you to something very much more exciting."

A walk of ten minutes brought them to the end of the town, where a one-storied Gothic villa, placed on a sandy slope, looked at the road between the posts of a lean verandah.

"In my uncle's time," said Glanville, "this house was the agent's. I don't know the present tenant, but I ought to make his acquaintance. If I find he's at home, I'll send for you; and I beg that you'll come in."

Glanville went up the short approach, tugged vigorously at the bell, and elicited a maid, whom he followed, after a brief parley with her, into the house. A few minutes later the maid emerged once

more, and invited Seaton to be so good as to step in likewise. Seaton remembered that he had not the least idea as to whose abode he was thus about to invade. He was ushered, in awkward ignorance, into the presence of an unknown host; and Glanville, in accordance with a much too frequent custom, mentioned one name only in introducing him; and that name was Seaton's own.

The room was furnished as a dining-room; but it was plain that its present occupant not only ate, but lived in it; for many of the chairs were loaded with the reports of learned societies; and the sideboard was adorned with an inkstand, in addition to a cheese and a biscuit-tin. A still more remarkable spectacle was, however, afforded by the table. There, on a green baize cover, stood an air-pump with a glass bell; close beside it was an ordinary kitchen weighing-machine, with some weights in one scale and a raw mutton-chop in the other; and close to the table was a blushing and fluttered young lady, who seemed anxious to escape, like a sparrow, through the first available aperture. Seaton's entrance sufficed to give her the courage of desperation. "I'm afraid I can't wait," she gasped. "Some gentlemen will be expecting me at croquet."

"I will, then," said her host, "bid you good-bye for the present. And don't forget, at your game, that the balls, in all their movements, however erratic and unexpected by you, represent the exact results of a catena of antecedent causes."

The young lady, when she reached the door, appeared to recover her assurance. "You would not think that," she said, "if you saw young Mr. Maxwell. I'm sure, if he happens to hit anything, it's due to no cause at all."

Seaton when she was gone was able to examine his host. He was dressed in a long frock-coat and a waistcoat flecked with bread-crumbs; but his tall and commanding presence transfigured both his dress and the room, and seemed to diffuse around him an atmosphere charged with power. So much was this the case that Seaton felt almost shocked at the flippant temerity with which Glanville ventured to address him.

"I'm much afraid," said Glanville, "that Mr. Seaton and I have—I trust only for a moment—separated an Eloisa from an Abelard."

The other, however, was above the reach of levity. "No, no," he said. "I am sincerely gratified by seeing you. I have to pay a feudal duty of thanks to a most liberal landlord. Did you happen to hear what that young woman said? It showed—what I always find—that by far the most difficult thing to instil into the ordinary mind is the idea of universal causation."

"And who," asked Glanville, "is your fair pupil? And

" 'What meant that tumult in the vestal's veins'

as she went?"

"I presume," said the other, smiling, "that you have quoted a line of poetry. Poetry for me, I fear, is a non-functional by-product of organic life, which I understand as little as I cultivate it. The young lady is a Miss Kathleen Walsh, niece of your late agent, and daughter of a Protestant clergyman. You see those scales and that air-pump. I'll tell you the use I was making of them. Miss Walsh, with whom I frequently take a constitutional walk in the morning, is interesting as a specimen of the workings of the ordinary mind. She informed me

that there was, or is going to be—I forget which—some religious service or gathering here, the object of which is to pray for rain. I asked if she believed in the efficacy of such means of modifying the meteorological conditions of the district. She manifested surprise at my doubting it. I have just now been having a little grave talk with her on the subject—illustrated by experiments. I had that mutton-chop brought in—my evening's dinner—and, as she remarked, not a large specimen of its kind. We weighed it; and then I asked her if she would think it right and reasonable to offer up a prayer that the chop might be made larger. She said no. I asked her her reason for giving me so sensible an answer, and she said that the reason was that to make the chop heavier would be a miracle; and miracles, as every Protestant knows, came to an end with the death of the last apostle. 'Very well, then,' I said, 'let us now turn to this air-pump.' I explained to her the nature of a vacuum. I exhausted the glass bell, and showed her how, on my turning a tap, the air rushed into it. I then said to her, 'Would you think, my dear young lady, of praying that air might not rush into vacuums? You would no more do that than you would think, as a young housekeeper, of keeping down the butcher's bill by praying that every pound of meat might miraculously be converted into two.' She admitted all this; and I was saying to her, Mr. Glanville, when you entered, 'Then why should you ask God—as you ask when you pray for rain—to do something with the atmosphere of the whole globe which you admit it would be absurd to expect Him to do with regard to that pneumatic toy?' There is more in that argument, as you, Mr. Glanville, know, than at first

meets the eye of a young woman like Miss Walsh—a great deal more than meets the eyes of these strange survivals from the past, who are crowding here to wrangle over the details of Hebraistic cult. If a catarrh with which I am somewhat afflicted permits me, I propose, with the aid of my air-pump, to give a little lecture on this same subject here.”

“Then so far as I gather,” said Seaton, with extreme deference, “the great sign and wonder that will signalise the general triumph of science will be the general cessation of prayer.”

“Assuredly,” said his host; “assuredly—that is, if by prayer we mean more than an elevating reflection on the unalterable character of our known relation to the Unknowable.”

“In other words,” said Seaton, “religious theology means the organised knowledge of God. Scientific theology means our organised recognition of our ignorance of Him.”

“I wish,” interposed Glanville, “if Miss Walsh’s attractions are not too much for you, you’d come over to me for a night or two, and give a lecture on Causation to my friends.”

“I thank you,” said the host gravely. “General society is not much in my line. Fashionable society is not in my line at all. But I have always held that rational conversation is a valuable stimulant to the cerebral, and also to the digestive organs; and perhaps, if I saw my way to accepting your kind suggestion, you might assist me in a work in which I am now engaged—a collection of racial traits peculiar to the Irish Kelts.”

“By all means,” said Glanville. “Think the matter over. We can arrange it by post or telegram.”

The conversation then diverged to the general condition of Ireland, and in due time the two visitors withdrew.

"And who is it we've been calling on?" asked Seaton, when they were outside the house.

"He," said Glanville, "is the great Mr. Cosmo Brock—the hierophant of that modern knowledge which we spent the morning in quarrelling over. And now we must be hurrying back, as fast as the launch can take us; for my friends are coming by two different routes, and if they don't have a breakdown as we did, some of them will have arrived before us."

It was nearly six o'clock before they reached home again. As they walked along the terrace between the house and the orange trees, Seaton's heart sank; for he saw at an open window some black things which were not shadows, and some white things which were not flowers. These things—and he knew it—were the skirts of feminine dresses.

CHAPTER III

THE unhappy Seaton, who shrank from these fringes of the fashionable world, retired for refuge to the conventual seclusion of his bedroom, where he cultivated his shrinking from society till the gong sounded for dinner; nor did he derive much comfort from the assurance which Glanville had given him that he would find the intruding company to be really theologians in disguise. With the courage of shyness, however, whilst the gong was still reverberating, he gave a last pull to his necktie, and went down to meet his doom.

When he entered the drawing-room he found himself alone with a man, who was standing before the empty fireplace. The aspect of this personage was certainly not theological. His age might have been about sixty. His carefully trimmed moustache was slightly waxed at the tips: a turquoise surrounded by diamonds shone on his shirt-front, and his collar, as though it were a bearing rein, so upheld his chin that he jerked his head at intervals with a kind of jaunty restiveness. Seaton, with his grey-blue eyes, which were dreamy, though half-humorous, with his shock of ruddy hair, and the hesitating uncertainty of his pose, formed a curious contrast to the stranger, who seemed to

be certain of everything. The two men bowed and looked at each other like dogs of different species.

At length the gentleman of the magnificent turquoise stud gave a nervous pull to the corresponding turquoises on his cuffs, and said abruptly, "I wonder if our host has any grouse here."

Seaton's answer was a faltering murmur, which sounded like "I don't know."

"Ireland," said the other, as if he were addressing the window, "might, if properly managed, be the finest sporting country in the world. But it's never been the fashion. God knows why—but it hasn't."

Here, however, he stopped short, and turned round to look at the doorway, through which Glanville now entered, with a lady in black preceding him. Her handsome face was sympathetic and full of thought; and Seaton, the moment he saw her, experienced a sensation of relief. "My dear Mr. Glanville," he heard her say to her host, "I'd no idea I was to be meeting such very smart company as this."

"Never mind," replied Glanville in a soothing voice, "he's only here for a night. To-morrow he joins his yacht—he and several others." Then coming up to Seaton, and laying a hand on his arm, "I see," he said, "you've already made acquaintance with Sir Roderick Harborough. Here is Mrs. Vernon, who tells me she's an old friend of yours."

Seaton started. He scrutinised the lady in black, and then was aware that his hand was being grasped by hers, whilst her cordial voice was recalling the pleasant fact that years ago she had met him at his uncle's house in Lanarkshire. Their incipient conversation was, however, promptly interrupted by Sir Roderick, who, feeling that the times were out

of joint when anybody of importance overlooked him, claimed Mrs. Vernon's attention as something properly belonging to himself. Mrs. Vernon responded with a graciousness that was not without a sting of frost in it, and at once went on to the question, "How is Lady Henoria?"

Sir Roderick was a man whom any allusion to his wife was apt to affect like cold water dropped into a boiling saucepan. "Lady Henoria," he said drily, "is enjoying the very best of health, which she wouldn't be doing if she came yachting with me. My dear, sweet child, who's your new dressmaker? Let me look at you."

The last words were addressed not to Mrs. Vernon, but to an upstanding young lady, with slightly protruding eyes, and a self-possessed frank expression, to whom Sir Roderick had attached himself by taking possession of her arm, and turning her round to the light in order to examine her toilette.

Meanwhile the room had been slowly filling. Seaton could not make out much with regard to the composition of the assemblage; but he found, when dinner was announced, that Mrs. Vernon was assigned to him as a partner, whilst Glanville led the way with a lady of stately aspect, to whose hair, like white floss silk, slightly sprinkled with diamonds, some black lace was attached, which gave her the air of an abbess.

When the dimness of the drawing-room had been exchanged for the sparkling lights of the dining-room, some dozen people found themselves confronting each other at a round table; and, Mrs. Vernon's attention having been engrossed by her other neighbour, Seaton had nothing to do but to look about him and listen. At first everything was for him a

mere Babel of voices, like sounds heard in a dream. Then he became conscious of the clear and incisive articulation of a jewelled little lady on the opposite side of the table, who had lately, it appeared, been assisting at some royal picnic, and whose face still shone with the glories of the social Sinai. Seaton pricked up his ears as he listened to her, for she seemed to be talking sense. She was informing a dignitary, who wore the garb of a bishop, that certain fiscal reforms of a highly complicated nature, which rumour said were to be advocated by a leading member of the Government, would ruin every trade in the country, and especially the dear old poor people. "You should have heard Francie Duchess the other night," she continued. "She was even more rabid than I." The Bishop, who was evidently of the lady's way of thinking, declared himself pleased to find that she had formed so sound a judgment; but he was not equally pleased when the lady improved the occasion by rallying him, with condescending friendliness, on the beauty of his episcopal ring. "I should like," she said, "to go down on my knees to it, as Francie does to her cardinal." The Bishop withdrew his episcopal hand hastily, and was grateful to Glanville, who had caught the conversation, for interposing.

"You must," said Glanville to the lady—a newly risen star of fashion—"have a genius for balancing arguments on both sides of the question, since your judgment has been formed so quickly, and with such refreshing decision."

"Oh," said the lady airily, "women can form their judgments—I don't know if I've got quite the right word—by intuition. They don't want to burrow like moles through a lot of stupid old arguments."

Isn't that so, Bishop? I'm sure you agree with me."

"Come," said Glanville, "what are the Bishop's views on the value of feminine judgment?"

The Bishop, who saw in a topic of this kind a sort of conversational mound on to which he could climb into dignity, sharply cleared his throat, as though he were still what he once had been—a schoolmaster—and were about to intimidate his pupils with some salutary announcement from his desk.

"I agree with Mrs. Harland," he said, deigning to smile slightly, "that judgment, whether feminine or masculine, is independent of formal arguments. We don't praise a man's judgment when he accepts the demonstrations of Euclid. A judgment, I should say, is the result of arguments that are unconscious. The mind in forming it works so fast, and on so many materials, that we can follow its operations no more than we can follow the circulation of our blood. A judgment is something that is formed for us, rather than formed by us, just as a clear image of a distant object is formed on the retina of a person who is gifted with long sight."

Seaton began to think that the conversation was taking a turn which sooner or later might make him wish to join in it; but a lady not Mrs. Harland, on the other side of the Bishop, captured the Bishop's attention, with a pair of admiring eyes, and lured him down like a Lorelei into the depths of some private intercourse: and presently Seaton's ears refused, do what he would, to hear any other sound but the voice of Sir Roderick Harborough, who, a little way off, was informing some lady of his own complete agreement with the dying words of a friend of his, to the effect that remorse was infinitely preferable to

regret. "Remorse for what you've enjoyed," said Sir Roderick, "so we're told, and so I firmly believe, can be put right by the Church, and the more there is of it the easier the Church can cure you: but it would take a good many parsons some time to cure you of regret for what you've missed."

Here again was a topic which Seaton thought worth debating, though Sir Roderick had stated his principles of moral philosophy in a manner different from that of the professors to whom Seaton was accustomed: but even this fragment of intelligible opinion was lost forthwith in an interchange which now was growing more general, of personal allusions and questions, most of which, so far as Seaton was concerned, might have referred to the population of Mars. They bore a singular resemblance to those which had, at the ball in London, sent Mr. Brock to his bed with such a sense of his own superiority. Indeed, one of the subjects was the same—namely, the doings of the fair Mrs. Majendie, who seemed to be on the eve of achieving renown in the Divorce Court, and already was far more celebrated than most Cabinet ministers. Another subject which proved equally popular was someone bearing the surname, or the Christian name of Marcus, who had been caught cheating at cards, and whose reputation had exploded like a shell. A certain Lady Cecily Morland was frequently mentioned also with a blame that was akin to pity, as having once again been her own worst enemy, through what seemed her besetting weakness—a public lapse from sobriety: whilst another lady, with whose name Seaton himself was familiar, she being now on her trial for maltreating one of her children, was much in request as a victim of indignant conversational justice.

The Bishop alone, with his soft-eyed, admiring neighbour, was lost to the world in the privacy of some superior intimacy; and he trifled meanwhile with a curious antique spoon, which he eyed superciliously, as though it were a Roman doctrine.

Seaton, however, in spite of all this, began to feel somewhat happier when Mrs. Vernon, freeing herself from his rival, turned to him with an air of intimacy, and having found that most of the persons present were strangers to him, discreetly lowered her voice and set herself to give him an account of them. One of them was Lord Restormel, an ex-Viceroy of India. Another was Mr. Brompton, once a Roman Catholic priest, who had married a wife and invented a new religion. The girl with the protruding eyes and spluttering address was Miss Hagley. "And that," Mrs. Vernon continued, "is the Bishop of Glastonbury facing you. The lady next him—I don't mean the vulgar little cat who just now was talking about taxation and duchesses—I mean," she said, lowering her voice, "the one who's got hold of him now, and is talking about sermons and preachers—she's the wife of Captain Jeffries, my neighbour. She's the largest-hearted woman in the world, as everybody knows except him. She never says 'No' to a man, and never abuses a woman; and the odd thing is that the saintliest clergy adore her as much as secular sinners, though I hope in a different way. The man with sparkling eyes, and eager, gesticulating hands, is Mr. Hancock, the editor of *The Dictionary of Contemporary Life*. There's no one he doesn't know, and nothing he won't talk about. The white-haired lady by Mr. Glanville is Lady Snowdon, my aunt. Happily she's as clever as she thinks she is, else she would not be endurable.

The man trying to make love to Mrs. Harland is that odious Sir Roderick Harborough, as you know. His wife is an admirable woman, and yet he has three establishments. I'll tell you more afterwards. Let us listen to what the Bishop is saying."

It seemed that by this time the circulation of topics had brought to the Bishop the story of the lady who had lapsed from sobriety, and that he was wrapping her reputation in the mantle of Christian charity. "In a case like hers," he was saying to the whole table, "one should be very cautious in judging—very cautious. Her father, her grandfather, three of her four uncles—it's a sad thing to think of—all had the same failing. One may venture to call it, in her case, not a fault, but a physical malady."

"Quite right," said Sir Roderick. "I knew them all—every one of 'em—capital fellows, none better—except—well, except for this"; and he delicately explained his meaning by raising a glass of champagne a trifle higher than was necessary before he proceeded to drink it. "It's not her fault—not her fault at all. Some people are born that way. Eh, what?" he exclaimed, suddenly leaning forward, "What's that you're saying, Rupert? Do I hear you saying you'd have Marcus down here to stay with you? Why, I tell you, Jack Hereford saw the cards in his hand. God bless my soul! You'll be having Mrs. Masters next—is that the she-devil's name?—who crippled her child by beating it."

"I think," replied Glanville, "that we are probably much too hard on her. For all we know, the child was intolerably irritating; and I'm sure, from her pictures, that the mother had bad temper engrained in her constitution."

In spite of the deference due from guests to a

host, this utterance was received with a murmur of shocked remonstrance ; whilst Sir Roderick pulled his moustache by one of its waxen ends, and dragged a fold of his throat through the points of his collar in indignation.

"How do you know," said Mrs. Jeffries, her cheeks pink with emotion—"how do you know that the poor little thing was irritating? A woman with Mrs. Masters's mouth would be cruel to a perfect angel."

"By the way," said Mr. Hancock eagerly, "I can tell you about Mrs. Masters a very curious thing. My friend Dr. Hudson, the celebrated criminal pathologist, assures me that the skull of this lady is just the same in shape as that of Marie Godin—you must all of you remember the case—who murdered her three children six years ago at Lyons."

"I can quite believe it," said Captain Jeffries solemnly. "I saw Mrs. Masters in court—I often go to hear cases, when there's nothing worth looking at at Christie's—and I tell you, Rupert, if Mrs. Masters didn't look like what I believe she is, a lady, she's the sort of woman a policeman would run in in the street—run her in without waiting to ask if she'd done anything. And her being a lady," he added, "only makes it worse."

"And tell me, Dick," said Glanville, "do you think that a British jury, when they look, as they probably will look, at the mouth and the eyes of Mrs. Majendie, will come to a conclusion about her conduct in the same summary manner?"

"Mrs. Majendie," said Sir Roderick doggedly, "is a very dear little, nice little amiable little lady. She never did an unkind thing in her life. It's not

in her. I only wish I could have taken her yachting with me till all her troubles are over."

"That, Sir Roderick," said Lady Snowdon, "would have established her reputation at once." Lady Snowdon spoke in a tone of condescending sarcasm; but her words came to Sir Roderick as the choicest of all possible compliments, and he smiled at himself in his silver plate, rejoicing that he looked so young.

"Listen, Roderick," said Glanville, "let us make up—me and you—a choice little yachting party together. You shall bring Lady Cicely and Mrs. Majendie. I'll bring Mrs. Masters and Marcus. These two could help themselves no more than the others. You tell us that Mrs. Majendie can't help being kind. The Bishop tells us that Lady Cicely can't help being tipsy. Dr. Hudson says that Mrs. Masters can't help being cruel; and Marcus—why should we leave him in the cold?—he, no doubt, is unable to help cheating. They are none of them guilty of faults. They are all of them victims of malformations—or maladies, for that is the word which, I think, the Bishop recommends to us."

The Bishop looked at Glanville with an expression of extreme annoyance.

"If you argue like that," said Lady Snowdon, to whom such discussions were familiar, "where will you draw the line?"

"Precisely," said Glanville, "that is the problem—where? Who is the theologian, who is the philosopher that will tell us?"

This sceptical question was hardly out of his mouth when it seemed as if a prophet had been specially raised up to answer it. The Bishop's lips were tightly closed, like a vice; but Sir Roderick Harborough, who had been fuming for the last five

minutes, now saw his opportunity, and, pushing his wine-glasses away from him, spoke under an inspiration at once so urgent and copious that it hardly allowed his message to arrange itself in logical order. His natural style, moreover, was not that of an Isaiah.

"Hang it, Rupert," he said, "it's very unbecoming in me, who sit here drinking your champagne—and very fine champagne it is—if I'm not mistaken, it's Pol Roger, of eighty-six—it's very unbecoming in me to tell you you're talking nonsense. But do you mean seriously to say that a man like Marcus—born a gentleman—a cool man, with all his wits about him—I never saw anybody cooler under fire than Marcus was—could no more help cheating at cards than he could help having the measles or a cough? For that's what all your talk about bumps and maladies comes to. Do you mean to say that I happen not to be a blackguard only because my head is some particular shape? Do you mean to say that we—we, the Committee of the Turf Club—should have kept the fellow on, in order to have our pockets picked by him, on the ground that he picked them because he couldn't possibly help it?"

"My dear Roderick," said Glanville, "you might have kept him out of the card-room. That would have been quite sufficient. You might have safely smoked or dined with him, or walked with him in the park, as I've very often seen you doing."

"Walk with him in the park!" exclaimed Sir Roderick, with increasing vehemence. "Walk in the park in the morning with a man who, whether he could help it or not, would, as all London knows, be picking my pocket at night—or, if not mine,

yours? But it's not that, Rupert. You're quite on the wrong tack. The fellow *could* help it, let the shape of his head be what it will; and I'd say the same, and I'd never be in the same room with him, if I knew that he'd never touch a card again till Doomsday. God bless my soul!" he continued, "what would become of us all—what would become of morality—what would become of religion—eh, Bishop?—what would become of the turf, if we could none of us run straight when we were tempted to run crooked? And Marcus was not tempted—that's another point. What was a ten-pound note—what was a monkey—to him? He cheated because he was determined to cheat; and if the Committee hadn't done what they did—not that there was any question of that—I, for one, should have resigned; and I'll tell you on what grounds. I don't want," he said, "to usurp the Bishop's place—but I'm quite sure he'll agree with me—I should have resigned on the ground that to condone a fault is to be guilty of it."

This new summing up of the Christian code of morality produced a silence, which was, however, promptly broken. It was broken by an unexpected speaker. This was Miss Hagley, the young lady with the protruding eyes and slightly spluttering utterance, who suddenly plunged after Sir Roderick into the deep waters of philosophy, and, her thoughts wandering to certain South African warriors, exclaimed, "And if cowards can't help being cowardly, brave men can't help being brave: so why should we praise heroism?"

"Very well put, Miss Hagley," said Mr. Hancock. "We can't have one logic for our virtues and another logic for our vices, any more than we can have one law for the rich and another law for the

poor. And this reminds me of something I should like to ask Mr. Glanville. He presided at a dinner and made a most eloquent speech in honour of Colonel Grandison. I should like to ask him——”

But Miss Hagley was not to be interrupted. “And look,” she continued, “just look at Charley Langford, and the way in which he stuck to the girl he was engaged to marry, when everybody tried to make out that she’d forged a cheque—which she hadn’t done! If he couldn’t have helped sticking to her——”

“Let us wait,” said Lady Snowdon, who had been on the point of rising, “and hear what would have happened. My dear, finish your sentence.”

“I was only just saying,” said Miss Hagley, in a slightly masculine voice, “that if anybody stuck to me when I was in a tight place simply because he couldn’t help sticking—here, Sir Roderick, be a brick, and pick up my rather dirty glove—I’d as soon think of saying ‘Thank you’ to an old bit of cobbler’s wax.”

CHAPTER IV

"**T**HAT'S a damned good sort of girl," said Sir Roderick Harborough to Captain Jeffries, settling himself down by him, when the ladies had left the room. "She gave it them straight that time. I'm glad she's coming on the yacht with me. Never sick—and when swimming she's almost pretty. What's this? Rupert's old Madeira? It's been in the cellar, so he tells me, for seventy-five years."

The rest of the gentlemen had meanwhile rearranged themselves also, and leaving Sir Roderick to discuss with Captain Jeffries the mystery of a well-bred retriever that obstinately refused to retrieve, prepared as they filled their glasses to resume the suspended fray.

"You were asking a question, Hancock," said Glanville, "when the Muse of philosophy interrupted you."

"I was only," said Mr. Hancock, "going to tackle you with another curious statement of Dr. Hudson's. He told me that Colonel Grandison's head is the typical head of a soldier, just as the head of Mrs. Masters is the typical head of a criminal. Now I should like just to ask you——"

"Yes," said Glanville, laughing. "I foresee the

coming question. If I believe myself justified in not blaming a born blackguard——”

“My dear Glanville,” said the Bishop, as if he were correcting an exercise, “you are running away with an assumption. No man is born a blackguard.”

“Very well, then,” said Glanville, “let us say a born dipsomaniac. If I believe myself justified—and this belief we know to be the Bishop’s also—in not blaming a born dipsomaniac, how am I justified—here is what you want to ask me—in consenting to spout in public the praises of a born hero? And I am bound to tell you that, though I should no doubt repeat the proceeding, I can make no reasonable defence of it. All our moral judgments, whether of praise or blame, are equally opposed to everything we can call reason. There is my position. Now let us have yours.”

The Bishop’s face, as he heard this portentous avowal, looked as though sulphur were beginning to burn on his dessert-plate. Mr. Hancock’s reply, however, did something to soothe him. “I’m sure, Bishop,” he said, with the confident familiarity of a successful man of the world, “you won’t mind my answering that question plainly. The late Queen, the last time I was at Balmoral”—Mr. Hancock omitted to state that the last time was also the first—“said to me, ‘Hancock,’ she said, ‘the Bishop of Glastonbury is the widest-minded of all my bishops.’ Well, so far as mere evidence goes, I’m free to confess I consider Mr. Glanville right. As a mere man of science, or as a strict logician, I can’t for the life of me see at what point freedom, or responsibility, or moral praise and blame, find their way into the mechanism of human existence. But they may

come in—mind you, I add this—they may come in some way of which we know nothing. Theoretically I'm agnostic about the matter—an agnostic pure and simple. But practically," said Mr. Hancock, extending an emphatic hand, "practically—this is a very different pair of shoes—I say that whether our wills are really free or not, we're bound to assume, Bishop, that they are free, as a kind of working hypothesis. Everybody at this table to-night, excepting Mr. Glanville himself, has shown that what I call this working hypothesis of freedom is practically instinctive in his mind or hers: and Mr. Glanville, as I very shrewdly suspect, is trying to pull our legs when he affects to think differently."

"I don't doubt it," said the Bishop drily. "Glanville, I must confess I utterly fail to see what all this discussion is driving at. To play at turning our most sacred beliefs into doubts merely for the sake of reviving them under the name of working hypotheses seems to me not only a useless, but also a perilous game."

"You must remember," said Glanville, "that to-night it was you who started it, by saying that an hereditary drunkard cannot morally be blamed for drinking. Some of us may be born drunkards, but nobody is a born blackguard. I don't say myself that both statements may not be true. I only say that personally I am not able to reconcile them."

The Bishop sniffed and frowned. "If you really wished it," he said, "I could give you an answer now—an answer in a few sentences. The degree to which inherited tendencies interfere with the freedom of the will is a difficult question, I grant you—solely, however, because it is concerned with an incalculable variety of cases, no two of which are

identical ; but the fact of our underlying freedom is no more rendered doubtful by such cases than the efficacy of a rudder is rendered doubtful by the violence of typhoons or currents. Consciousness of self," said the Bishop, looking round him to see if his scholars were attentive, "as we all know, is logically our first certainty—consciousness of self as a single indissoluble entity ; but our consciousness of freedom is no less fundamental. *I think, therefore I am*, may be equally well rendered, *I will, therefore I am*. Ay, Glanville, and wait, for I am going a step farther. With equal distinctness we are conscious of one thing more—not merely that we exist, not merely that we will freely, but that, being of two courses able to will either, we are under an obligation to a law-giver higher than ourselves freely to will the one, and freely to reject the other. There you have what the Americans call bed-rock, the indissoluble Self, with its three primary attributes—Existence, Freedom, and Obligation. In these three data of consciousness you have natural theology in a nutshell. No science," said the Bishop, contemptuously flicking away a few profane crumbs which had ventured to settle on his apron, "no science can touch them."

"Well," said Mr. Hancock, anxious to make things pleasant, "I must congratulate the Bishop on an admirably lucid statement. If we can't all of us quite go with him theoretically, we all go with him practically. Without what I call the working hypothesis of freedom, what, as Sir Roderick very pertinently asked, would become of morality? What would become of religion? What, I will venture to add, would become of business enterprise?"

"And you may ask also," said Lord Restormel in a low voice to Mr. Hancock, "what would become of love, of romance, of sentiment? We all of us remember a certain poem by Sappho—I've no doubt the Bishop has birched many a boy for not being able to construe it"—the Bishop here began to look round him uneasily—"in which she describes by its signs the passion that has made her famous. We remember the fire, the cold, that ran through her shuddering body—the dimmed eyes, the confused humming in her ears. We can see her face as Swinburne, her magnificent imitator, describes it—

" 'White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses.' "

The Bishop's face at these words underwent a curious change.

"Well," said Lord Restormel, totally unconscious of the fact, "I can only say that if Sappho had no will of her own—if her soul was nothing more than the sum of her nerves and tissues, then a heart-ache means no more than a stomach-ache; and not only Sappho's poetry, but all the love-poetry in the world, is not poetry at all, but a doctor's diagnosis in metre."

"Don't you think," the Bishop said to Glanville, "that this room is getting very hot? Sir Roderick and Captain Jeffries have both gone to the window. Don't let me disturb you, but with your permission, I'll join them."

"By all means," said Glanville. "Have your coffee outside. You will find coffee, Roderick, and everything else, in the portico."

"Our host," said the Bishop to Sir Roderick, as

they went out together on to the terrace, "has been endowed with a fine intellect; but it is an intellect gone astray. Were it only as healthy as yours, he's a man of whom I could have made anything."

Sir Roderick was pleased by this compliment, but he did not entirely understand it; and seeing that Captain Jeffries had overheard it, he could not resist winking at him.

As soon as the last dark flutter of the Bishop's coat-tails had vanished, the party at the dinner-table assumed slightly easier attitudes.

"I think," said Mr. Hancock, indulging himself in a smile he had been long suppressing, "our right reverend friend was not very happy in his apologetics. If modern scientific psychology shows anything at all, there's nothing, I suppose, it shows with more absolute plainness than that our immediate consciousness of freedom is just as much of a delusion as what we once took for our consciousness that the sun went round the earth. If the doctrines of evolution and heredity have any truth in them whatever—and even bishops don't any longer reject them—there's no single faculty of the mind whose purely natural pedigree is more clearly traceable than the natural pedigree of conscience. The Bishop, and all his brother divines with him, are so many theological Sinbads. They mistake a fish for an island; and as soon as they light their fire on it, what they call their bed-rock sinks."

"And tell me, Mr. Hancock," interposed Seaton, for the first time joining in the discussion, "does science dissolve our consciousness of our own existence as completely as it dissolves our consciousness of obligation and freedom? Or is it good enough to leave us that?"

"It all depends," said Mr. Hancock good-humouredly, "on what we mean by such words as *Self* and *We* and *I*. If you mean by *We* and *I* some indissoluble entity, which has come down from goodness knows where, as the Bishop does, science dissolves our consciousness of it like sugar in a cup of tea. It is an astonishing thing that a shrewd man like the Bishop should be content to base the convictions of which he is the special exponent on arguments which would excite the laughter of any clever boy in a board school."

"He merely," said Glanville, "shares the fate of all our clergy. It's hard to blame them. They are like the cashiers of a bank that has lost its assets, and all they can do is so to cook the accounts that the wretched depositors may fancy it still solvent."

"You're still at it, I see," said a rich, lazy voice, which seemed to drag heavily under a load of sluggish good-nature. The speaker was Captain Jeffries. "I've come," he said, "to ask you for a cigar. I don't want to interrupt you. It's a cut above me—this discussion of yours. All the same," he continued, sinking into a chair, "I thought about something outside, while the Bishop was prosing, which reminded me of what was said at dinner. It's to do with dogs and horses. You know, Rupert, I can't say I go with you—not altogether, anyhow—in what you said just now about Marcus. Whatever else a man can't help doing, I maintain that a gentleman *can* help cheating at cards. But I've had—it's this that I thought I should like to tell you—I've had hounds that were born wrong uns—it's the oddest thing in the world—surly brutes from the very day they were littered. The rest of the pack hated

them. And then mares, too—I dare say you all of you know this—you get mares sometimes that won't look at a horse. I suppose my wife," said Captain Jeffries, exhibiting an opinion of her that was not shared by his intimates, "I suppose if they were women, my wife would look on them as saints and have a service in honour of them. I don't think she'd get many breeders to go to it. Well, life's a rum thing. Men are like animals, and animals just like men. After all—be a good fellow, Rupert, and just chuck me the cigar-cutter—after all, I suppose we're all in the same box. If the Bishop could prove that we were not—by the way, I believe he's proving it to my wife now—if he could prove it to me, or any practical racing man, I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd bring in a Bill in the House of Commons to increase his salary by five thousand a year."

When the *séance* at the dinner-table broke up, as it did presently, and those who had assisted at it made their way to the terrace, Lord Restormel put his arm into Glanville's, and loitered with him on the step of the window, while the others sought the portico, on which the drawing-room opened, where women's voices were murmuring from a flower-bed of skirts and draperies.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Lord Restormel, "look there!"

This ejaculation was called forth by the spectacle of two figures—a male figure and a female—which were slowly walking past, not, indeed, arm in arm, but still in pleasing propinquity. The male figure was tall, and its hands were clasped behind it. The Bishop's voice was clear—the male figure was his—and as he went slowly by, some of his authoritative words could have been missed by no one who had

the privilege of being in his neighbourhood, though they were uttered by himself for the benefit of Mrs. Jeffries only. "Scientific difficulties," he was saying, "there are none! Those who tell you that they exist, wish them to exist, as an excuse for indulging their own unhallowed passions. But though science has no difficulties for belief, life has many for the believer; and the Mind of the Church, in matters both of faith and conduct——"

Here to Lord Restormel and Glanville his accents became inaudible. It appeared that the Bishop had had, however, a third listener also. This was Mr. Brompton, who, looking for a dropped handkerchief, had been much excited by what he had heard and seen.

"There it is," he gasped. "Ah, it's the old, old story—clericalism—clericalism—clericalism! Everything would be so clear—everything so grand—so glorious—if only the world would free itself from this nightmare of discipline and dogma. After all, Mr. Glanville, all difficulties spring from that."

"Come here, both of you," said Lady Snowdon, as Glanville and Lord Restormel approached. "Mr. Hancock has been telling us of all your arguments in the dining-room. I'm glad, Mr. Glanville, they had driven the Bishop away before you compared him to the cashier of a bank that has lost its assets. Sit down and attend. We've a little plot to propose to you. Your servants have brought us a copy of the *Ballyfergus Examiner*, which contains three columns about these impending conferences. Well—the Bishop, you tell me, goes away in Sir Roderick's yacht, and Mrs. Jeffries too. Is Captain Jeffries anywhere near?"

"He's there," said Glanville, "seated on that

step. He won't hear what you say. By the shape of his back I know that he's thinking of New-market."

"Well," said Lady Snowdon, "what we were going to suggest was this. As soon as the orthodox party have left us more or less to ourselves, why shouldn't we have some conferences here on our own account, and talk over some of the questions which were set going at dinner? I mean such questions as that of the origin of our different characters. There's a question which in itself contains almost everything, from the meaning of our belief in science to the extent of our belief in the Bible. Why shouldn't we put these subjects in some sort of order, and take them one by one, like our clerical friends at Ballyfergus?"

"The Bible," echoed the voice of Captain Jeffries sleepily, as roused from his reverie he turned himself partly round. "We're told now that it was written by Ezra or Esdras. It wasn't by old Moses, anyhow. I've been thinking about those dogs, Rupert. Well, we are what we are, and there's an end of it. I see you've provided us with a card-table. I think I'll try if I can't get up a rubber."

"Who," said Lady Snowdon, as Captain Jeffries moved slowly away, "can doubt the spread of the higher education after that? But to go back to what you were saying, you and I and Mr. Hancock might arrange together to-morrow——"

Here she lowered her voice to a private murmur; but in doing so she disturbed herself by rendering unintentionally audible an elegant confidence of Mrs. Harland's to Sir Roderick Harborough. "And so I said to Prince Alexander—you know, Sir Roderick, what a dear he is—'It's very kind

of you, sir, to take such trouble for a poor little mouse like me.' But, oh, Sir Roderick, what I do wish more than anything is that I could get out of all of this, and be quite simple and quiet in the country."

"My dear Mrs. Harland," said Lady Snowdon, "you are an exceptionally fortunate person. The thing which of all things you most want to do is the thing which of all things you can any day do most easily."

"Nasty, cross old woman," murmured Mrs. Harland to Sir Roderick. "I'd far sooner go about with a sun-bonnet on my head than these." And she modestly called his attention to a cluster of diamonds in her hair.

Sir Roderick, who was not without a certain mischievous humour, looked at the jewels and said, "I don't see why you need be ashamed of them. They don't pretend to be striking, but they're quite enough for the occasion."

Lady Snowdon had resumed meanwhile her subdued conversation with Glanville; but the sounds of other voices were now beginning to multiply, and the passing and repassing of feet, either seeking cards or avoiding them, made her presently cut it short with the remark that she and Mrs. Vernon and one or two choice spirits would talk the whole thing over in private with their host on the following morning. "And now," she went on, rising, "after a drive of twenty-five miles—I don't know what other people may be going to do—but I'm going to bed."

Seaton, who was close by, with a look of relief, rose also. "Rupert," he said, "I shall follow Lady Snowdon's example."

“Well,” said Glanville, drawing him for a moment aside, “wasn’t I right? Haven’t you heard enough unconscious theology to-night to furnish a Bampton lecturer with materials for the lucubrations of a lifetime?”

CHAPTER V

LADY SNOWDON and Glanville, next day, an hour or so after breakfast, were slowly strolling together, at one end of the terrace ; and were occasionally looking back, as though they expected somebody to join them.

"I have heard as much discussion of this sort of thing in my time as most women," Lady Snowdon was saying ; "and for the majority of people the religious question still is, as it was in my young days, two questions. One is the question of whether the Christian religion, with all its miraculous incidents, is really a unique revelation of the Deity to the human soul. The other is the question of whether a Deity and a soul exist by whom a revelation of any kind could be either received or made. Well, logically—you must excuse a woman for talking about logic—we ought to discuss the last of these two questions first. But, my dear Mr. Glanville, most people are not logical ; and in this case I don't blame them. When they are told that science is in conflict with religion in general, the question which naturally engages their attention first, is how far it is fatal to the one religion they are familiar with—the mythology which has thus far been a buffer between themselves and scientific reality."

"I believe you are right," said Glanville. "Yes,

even a man like Huxley felt, when he was attacking what he honestly condemned as a superstition, that he was turning a wife out of doors whom he would miss though he found her intolerable. He would rid himself of an ignorant shrew, but he would be left with an empty chair."

"Exactly," Lady Snowdon assented. "And now I'm coming to my point. I think that in these conferences of ours it will be best to make a beginning by following the example of Ballyfergus, and start with considering what is our real attitude, not towards religion in general—whatever that may mean—but towards the Christian version of it—which you and I admit to be mere mythology, but which most people regard in a way which they can't explain even to themselves. There's my niece, Juliet Vernon. She's a case in point. Juliet's a clever woman—quick and sharp as a needle. She never goes to church except now and then to the Chapel Royal. I dined with her in London the other day—a little dinner of four—to meet Mr. Cosmo Brock. She tried to set her prize at ease before he had eaten his soup by telling him that of course in these days we none of us believe in miracles; and yet, if I may betray a secret, she always has a Bible by her bed, and reads as a kind of charm a few verses every night. She used to keep an invitation card of Lady Croydon's amongst the Psalms as a marker. But hush!" said Lady Snowdon, "here she is at last, and our other conspirators with her."

"I do hope," said Mrs. Vernon, who was accompanied by Mr. Hancock and Lord Restormel, "that I haven't kept you waiting. I couldn't get my maid: and I needn't tell you that the only pair of

boots I wanted was the only pair not in my bedroom. You said, Mr. Glanville, you'd take us to a certain secluded summer-house, where we shan't be interrupted either by bishops or by Mrs. Harlands."

"Mrs. Harland's father," said Lady Snowdon, as they were proceeding towards the retreat in question, "was a furniture dealer in Liverpool. Our dining-room carpet came from him. When I think of what society is becoming, I feel glad that I'm at the end of life instead of the beginning of it: and this, my dear Mr. Glanville," she added, turning gently round to him, "is perhaps the reason why I look calmly at many things. But Mrs. Harland possibly is a lady for whom you feel a great admiration."

"She's Roderick's friend, not mine," said Glanville. "I wonder what view of the Universe Mrs. Harland considers the smartest? Well, here's the summer-house: and now let us get to business."

"I always feel," said Lady Snowdon, seating herself and producing some knitting—a species of work which she cultivated as a means of rebuking idleness rather than as a practice of industry, "that a woman of Mrs. Harland's antecedents, who is trying to be what she calls smart, is the only one of God's creatures absolutely past praying for. Now, Mr. Glanville, begin and explain it all to Juliet. Of course, my dear, you understand generally what it is that we propose to do."

"Perfectly," said Mrs. Vernon, impatient of her aunt's patronage. "Nothing could be more interesting. I'm sure we all of us feel as if everything were turned upside-down. Monkeys, of course, were our grandfathers—nobody doubts that. We can't—at least, it seems so—think when our brains

are injured: and parts of the Bible were written three centuries after Christ—or was that the Athanasian Creed? I'm not quite sure of my dates. Anyhow, with all these discoveries, one hardly knows where one is: and I for one should be very glad to be shown."

"Well, Mrs. Vernon," said Glanville, "to put the matter shortly—here, Hancock, can you lend me a scrap of paper, and I'll jot it down—the questions before us will be three. Here's the first. Since we have most of us been accustomed to identify religion with Christianity, and since even the Churches themselves agree that many Christian doctrines are, in their old sense, no longer believable, how many do we believe still, or do we believe any? If we find that we still believe some, and that these are sufficient for our needs, our second and third questions will then seem almost superfluous; but if we find that science has made a clean sweep of the whole of this particular revelation, and all other revelations also—for we shan't reject Christianity in order to become Mahometans—we shall come to our second question; and our second question will be this: Will science, since it will not allow us to accept any one religion in particular, give us any ground for retaining those general hopes and feelings which all religions share as their common and inmost essence? You see that, don't you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "you have made it perfectly plain. Surely even to Christians that question would be interesting."

"And now," said Glanville, "for question three. If science does afford us a foundation for a religion of some kind, we must ask in what practical form such a religion can express itself. In dealing

with this question we shall have something definite to go upon ; for all the attempts that have been made to give us the thing wanted are reducible to two marked kinds ; and there are two members of our party who will be delighted to put them before us—Mr. Brompton and my friend Seaton. If we should end by finding either of these satisfactory, then our inquiry will for us have come to a happy close. But if, on the other hand, we find that these attempts are nonsense, and that, though it is easy to discredit Christianity, it is hard to devise a substitute for it, then——”

“Yes,” said Lady Snowdon, “and then?”

“Then,” said Glanville, “I propose to introduce to your notice a fourth question, or a fourth set of considerations, which may, perhaps, end by helping us. I’ll keep these till we see if they are really wanted. And now tell me what you think of our syllabus.”

“I don’t quite understand,” said Mrs. Vernon, “your mysterious hint at the end ; but your first three questions, though you have arranged them better than I could have done, are the questions with which everybody, it seems to me, is occupied more or less. And it really will be delightful to discuss them here ; for in London, you see, there is no time. People are always going out to parties ; and it’s difficult to get the right people together.”

“Look here, Mr. Glanville,” said Mr. Hancock. “Will you let me be secretary to the Conference, and get these notes of yours into some sort of tidy order ? For instance, as to question one, it might be made to run something like this, and would help us to keep to the point : ‘Whereas, till so lately as fifty years ago, nine-tenths of the civilised world

accepted Christianity'—I ought to put miraculous Christianity—'as indubitable, and never even took the trouble to call its fundamentals in question, why is it that to-day, for educated men and women, it has become as much of a fable as the religion of Odin or Jupiter?'"

Mrs. Vernon started, and looked with indignation at Mr. Hancock, who was scratching one of his whiskers with the tip of a gold pencil-case.

"I must protest," she said, "that your assumptions are a little too sweeping. No doubt we don't believe some things that our fathers did; but to lay it down, in this airy way, that we reject Christianity altogether—well, it simply is not true."

"May I ask, then," said Mr. Hancock, slightly nettled, "what parts of it you accept?"

"That's hardly a thing," said Mrs. Vernon, with a shrinking stiffness, "that one cares to talk of in public."

"Then, my dear," said Lady Snowdon, "we had better give up our conferences altogether, because it's precisely the thing that we are all of us proposing to discuss."

"I didn't mean that," said Mrs. Vernon, hastily recollecting herself. "I only mean that Mr. Hancock, when he says certain things, should speak for himself alone."

"Come, come," said Mr. Hancock. "It's only a matter of expression. I'll take care that we soften it all down."

"And when do you think," said Mrs. Vernon, who had now recovered her equanimity, and was anxious to correct the impression that she was in any way behind the times, "when do you think, Mr. Glanville, that our Synod may begin its sittings?"

"As to that," replied Glanville, "I've a little communication to make to you. We can't begin till the Bishop and Sir Roderick's party have gone. They were to have gone this evening, as the Bishop is engaged to preach to-morrow at Ballyfergus; but Roderick has just had a telegram saying that one of his yellow-haired ladies, with whom he has had a quarrel, has appeared at the hotel there, threatening to go on board his yacht—with which indeed she's familiar—and probably ensconce herself in the cabin set apart for the Bishop. Roderick knows how to manage her, and he's just gone off in my steam launch to do so. But he won't be able, he's afraid, to make a start till to-morrow. So what we've arranged is this. The launch will take him and the Bishop the first thing to-morrow to Ballyfergus, and Roderick will return with his yacht and pick up his party by moonlight. Well, an hour or two ago, when I was settling this with the Bishop, I told him that if he could only have stayed over Sunday, I would have asked him to preach—for there's service in the church in the garden—and he seemed so disappointed at not being able to do so, that I asked him if he would read prayers and give us a few words to-night. I know he's longing to be down on what he thinks is our amateur scepticism. But I fear that is not quite all. I've provided you also for to-morrow, which I hope you don't forget is Sunday, with two other preachers besides, who are both of them, like the Bishop himself, to play prominent parts at the great Ballyfergus Conference; so we shall not be able to open our own till Monday. I hope you won't mind hearing them. I think they ought to be interesting."

"Very much so," said Lord Restormel. "As we're going to begin with discussing the Christian

religion ourselves, it will be well to have before us the latest authorised expositions of it."

"And now, Mr. Glanville," said Mrs. Vernon, "may I take the opportunity of telling you that this morning I've heard from a niece of mine—Stephanie Leighton, who's at Ballyfergus, finishing a rest-cure? She is charming and very intelligent. Do you think you would let me ask her over here for a day or two?"

"By all means," replied Glanville. "My impression is that I've met her, and have experienced her charm and discovered her intelligence already. We'll arrange about that presently. Meanwhile, till the Bishop wakes us up to-night, we may give our souls a rest; and as Roderick has got the launch, we will go in the afternoon for a drive."

BOOK III

THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD

1

CHAPTER I

EVERYTHING augured well for the promised ministrations of the Bishop. The projected expedition took place successfully; and when the party returned, Sir Roderick was strutting on the terrace and holding a cigar in his mouth at an angle so peculiarly rakish as to show that his own expedition had been crowned with success also. The lady, as he confided to Glanville, had been pacified by a "cheque for two hundred," and was indeed at that moment on her way back to England, observing to the tips of her varnished boots in the railway carriage that "the old boy was not a bad sort after all."

Sir Roderick's good-humour was, in consequence, so great that, combined with his natural and essentially conservative devoutness, it made him perfectly willing to be present at the Bishop's ministrations, in spite of the fact that his rubber was thereby postponed; and nobody, when—the dining-room having been prepared for worship at ten—the Bishop proceeded to read a selection of simple prayers, uttered an amen more full of a Briton's faith than he did. The Bishop on this occasion showed to the best advantage. His obvious and complete sincerity appealed strongly to everyone; and even Captain Jeffries, who, propped against a mahogany chair, had been counting the cracks in the red leather

of its cushion, found himself muttering: "He's a good chap, that—whatever he is."

When the company rose, however, and found by the time they had seated themselves the Bishop standing erect like a narrow tower, with two of his fingers resting on the edge of the table, the impression produced by him underwent a subtle change. His manner was now that, not of a suppliant, but of a master—a master austere solicitous for the good of his erring children.

"I am," he began quietly, "not going to preach you a sermon. I am merely going to talk to you on certain serious subjects at rather more length than ordinary conversation would permit of. I may dispense, therefore, with the formality of a text, or—if you wish for one—let me tell you what my text shall be. It shall be the conversation which, in this very room, sprang up last night about that tremendous subject—freedom and moral responsibility—though that is not the point on which I mainly desire to speak to you.

"Now I confess that the interest which this subject excited moved me very deeply, because it showed how, when two or three are gathered together even for ordinary social intercourse, God or thoughts of God are there inevitably in the midst of them. At the same time," continued the Bishop, slightly rapping the table in the manner which suggested that there might possibly be a birch under it, "it seemed to me—I must say this fearlessly—that the very principle of moral responsibility—in other words, of all religion—was lightly questioned by some of you. There are excuses for such levity, which is, alas! too common; and I know what the excuses are. They consist

in the passing prevalence of ideas which call themselves scientific, but which, even when not individually false, are merely fragments of science perversely torn from the text, and accepted at a false valuation. Shall I tell you why? Because they minister to two things—to man's love of self and to his concupiscence. All ministers of the gospel will tell you that. However widely Christian apologists may differ, they are all unanimous here—even if here only."

Mrs. Jeffries smiled slightly, and fixed her eyes on her lap.

Mrs. Harland, who hoped that Sir Roderick was admiring her neck and shoulders, turned round to see if this was so, and whispered to him: "Isn't it interesting?"

"It is man's selfishness and his passions," resumed the Bishop, "believe me, and not true science that we have to deal with. As to the alleged conflict, therefore, between science and religion in general—natural religion, as we call it—I shall say very little. What I am going to say I said last night at dinner. It took me one minute to say it then. I shall now give myself two, and will put it in a slightly different form. What is the net result, then, of this science falsely so called? What is the net result, for instance, of the laboured lucubrations of Mr. Cosmo Brock? This: that all existence is simply one vast self-acting machine, of which metals, gases, fungi, apes, and the mind of man, are so many wheels or levers, differently shaped indeed, but made of the same substance and passive under the same impulse. But consider this flimsy theory in the light of true science itself. Test it by the three great admissions which men of science themselves willingly or un-

willingly make. Ay, test it by these. These basic admissions are as follows: Firstly, the Universe, as we know, being the product of matter and energy, between the dead matter and the energy that moves and directs it the gulf is infinite and impassable. Secondly, the Universe consisting of lifeless things and living, between the lifeless things and the very beginnings of organic life the gulf is infinite and impassable. Thirdly, between organic life, however highly evolved, and the human soul the gulf is infinite and impassable. Physics teaches us the first of these facts. Biology teaches us the second. Scientific psychology absolutely demonstrates the third. Thus in the scheme of nature there are three gaps or voids; and these voids are the foundation of our sure and eternal hope.

“So much, then, for so-called science, as destructive of natural religion. True science, as we have seen, instead of destroying such religion, gives us its general features in strokes which, though few, are unmistakable. It gives us, as it were, a grand charcoal sketch of the moral human soul and a moral God by whom alone such a human soul could have been created. But between these two we find there is one gap more. Man discerns God unmistakably, but discerns Him afar off; and his consciousness of union with Him is accompanied by a bewildered sense of separation. He cries therefore to Him, as a loving and lost son to a father. Since, however, God loves infinitely every human soul—since the salvation of every human soul born since the days of Adam is of infinitely more consequence to Him than all the courses of the stars—common sense tells us that He could not have left these souls desolate, begging in vain to reach Him and know

His will. He must, with reverence be it spoken, have made some direct response to them. That response is Revelation; and it is recorded for us in two places—firstly, in the Bible, and secondly, in the life of the Church from its earliest days to these.

“Well, then, so much being admitted, we approach the point on which I really wish to address you, and which may, with some show of reason, be called a special difficulty of to-day. Science, history, scholarship—many people are saying this—show us that the Bible is untrue; and if untrue, it cannot have been inspired. It is a shallow argument, but it yet deserves to be met. After all, then, let us ask, what does it really come to? Merely to this—that the Bible does not teach us strictly accurate science, that the Bible does not teach us strictly accurate history, that it does not always teach us strictly correct morality. It was never meant to teach us strictly accurate science. It was never meant to teach us strictly accurate history. It was never meant, at least—well, in a great many of its books—to teach us correct morality. It was never meant, in fact, as the late Dean of Canterbury nobly contended, to teach us anything that we could prove or disprove or find out for ourselves. This is the supreme criticism which God has specially commissioned the English Church to make. But this new perception of ours of the sense in which the Bible is not inspired does but serve to bring out in a new and fuller light the sense in which it really is so. Let me make my meaning plain.

“Though we are learning by science and scholarship—which are also God’s Revelation—that a literal interpretation of many parts of God’s book would grievously dishonour Him, that book still remains,

as a whole, God's great epic of Redemption—a book so richly composite that it contains matter which is purely legendary; matter which is approximately and sometimes really historical; matter which is barbarously immoral, and which has been included in the sacred pages by a typical Divine Economy in order to bring into relief the unapproachable divinity of the rest; matter which is in its tenor uniquely and sublimely edifying; and, lastly, matter which is in the strictest sense inspired, and must be interpreted by an exegesis of the very words and syllables of the original. To show you how differently these various elements must be treated, it will be enough to take two examples. It will be perfectly obvious," said the Bishop, "to any candid reader that the opening of the book of Genesis was never meant to tell us anything definite about the creation of the world and of life. Whatever the writer meant, he meant something very different from what he said. It is true that even here there are some statements which seem to anticipate roughly whatever there is of truth in the modern doctrine of evolution; and these were doubtless written by the very finger of the Eternal Himself: but the document as a whole merely tells us in a general, but authoritative way, that God made man perfect, that man refused to remain so, and that thus his future redemption became a divine necessity. But, on the other hand, whilst the great first book of the Bible may be taken, within limits, to mean almost anything we please, there occurs in the New Testament a single and isolated word, on whose strict philological meaning one of the most relieving and renovating confidences of the Christian Church depends. This is the Greek word 'aeonian,' as applied to the pains of

hell. Till a few years ago the word 'aeonian' was universally interpreted as meaning 'eternal,' or 'everlasting'; but we now know, by the light of modern spiritual criticism, that it means merely 'for a very considerable time,' or perhaps merely 'for a time that will seem considerable to the sufferer.'

"Well," continued the Bishop, "so far the case is simple. The answer to the doubter is complete. The only remaining perplexity emerges into light here; and it is this difficulty that I am now going to meet.

"Since the Bible is, as I have said, a book so richly composite, it will be asked—it is sure to be asked—it must be asked—by what human test its diverse elements are to be distinguished, so that we may pick out the words and sentences whose meaning is to be taken literally—such, for example, as the accounts of the Resurrection and the Ascension—from whole books whose literal meaning may be disregarded with the most reverent freedom. Yes, here is the question on the true answer to which I desire to insist to-night. The test of what is inspired in the Bible and what is not—on which test naturally the whole authority of the volume depends—is not to be found in any human faculty at all, but in the divinely guided consciousness of corporate Christendom, or, in other words, in the Mind of the Church. And now let me explain to you precisely what the Mind of the Church is. Christianity is like a grain of mustard seed not only in the sense that its adherents are to grow numerically till they include, as they will ere long, the inhabitants of the whole world, but also in the sense that, as the centuries roll on, its true meaning grows clearer to each generation of Christians. Hence the Church knows to-day what it

hardly knew even fifteen years ago—that an eternal hell would be inconsistent with God's goodness; and it finds, in the light of this knowledge, the diamond-glint of an inspired adjective, which proves that God in His gospel had long ago revealed this fact to us. And if," said the Bishop, his voice rising somewhat, "you ask me how we are to distinguish what the Mind of the Church tells us, seeing that the separate Churches resemble the inspired Scriptures in the multitude of their conflicting errors, I answer that those doctrines are ratified by the Mind of the Church—such, for instance, as the miraculous birth and the corporeal Ascension of the Lord—with regard to which all provinces of Christ's kingdom agree, not each province separately, such as the Roman, the Greek, the North German, the English—but all. At present, no doubt, this great and illuminating truth is consciously apprehended within the English Church only; but in God's own time it will spread. 'It must,' if I may quote the words of Archdeacon Wilberforce—words which echoed through the arches of our grand national Abbey—'have cost God much to have kept the secret of Redemption down the ages, and suffered men meanwhile to think so erringly about Himself; but the great purpose was in God's heart all the while—a purpose which He had kept hidden from the very foundation of the world.' What a complete answer this," exclaimed the Bishop, "to all the objections of the rationalist, as applied generally to the sublime scheme of Redemption! I may add myself," he went on, "that it must have cost God much also to have confined His earlier revelation to Abraham and his descendants, and deliberately have shut out the remainder of His beloved children from participation in it. Well, then,

it is surely no more wonderful that the English Church should at present be alone in understanding the foundation on which our faith rests, than that a small, ungrateful, and rebellious tribe like the Jews should for ages have been the exclusive recipients of God's gift of Revelation. But God never hurries. He has all eternity before Him in which to work out His plans. And meanwhile let us be grateful for the mercies we ourselves enjoy, knowing that wherever else the Mind of the Church may be, it at all events speaks to us in the Church of our own land, offering to us now, as authoritatively as it did nineteen hundred years ago, the one Spirit, the one Gospel then committed to the saints, and now changed only in having grown from childhood to maturity. With these thoughts in our mind, we may face science and criticism, and we shall find that from arrogant enemies they have been transfigured into humble friends."

"A very capital sermon," Sir Roderick was saying presently. "That was a facer for some people. Now, shall we cut for partners? I believe it all," he added, as he shuffled a pack of cards, "because *my* mother taught me; and *my* mother was one of the very best women in Europe."

CHAPTER II

SUNDAY morning dawned, and the Bishop by seven o'clock had started for Ballyfergus, accompanied by Sir Roderick Harborough, the launch bringing back, as arranged, the two expected clergymen, Mr. Maxwell and Canon Morgan; the latter of whom confided to Glanville that there was yet a third, who proposed to walk over eighteen miles of mountain on the chance of being allowed to perform a short office in the evening. "If I were you," said the Canon, "I would let him have his innings."

The prospect of three services, when it was first disclosed at breakfast, for which meal the clergymen arrived late, was not welcomed with a quite universal enthusiasm; but one of the party, as soon as the pilgrim's name was mentioned, exhibited a pleasure at once so devout and vivacious, and described him as possessing a personality and a mind so marvellous, that the terrors of his advent were soon converted into curiosity. The enthusiast who effected this change was Mrs. Jeffries.

"You *must* hear him," she said, gazing into Lord Restormel's eyes. "You *will* come, won't you—to please me?"

"Next," said Lord Restormel, affecting a clandestine whisper, "next to the privilege of kneeling *to* you is the privilege of kneeling *by* you."

Mrs. Jeffries acknowledged this compliment by an adroit pressure of his hand, and hoped that at divine service they might sing together out of the same hymn-book. When the party, however, found themselves in church, Lord Restormel seemed to have forgotten her; and she herself was so shocked by the aspect of the sacred edifice that she ceased altogether for a time to be conscious of the eternal masculine. The style was Italian, but it certainly failed to convey the smallest suggestion of the errors or the truths of Rome. The body of the building differed from a neglected concert hall mainly by reason of the presence of an overwhelming pulpit, on which were carved a coat-of-arms and a mitre; whilst the family pew, resembling an enormous tribune, faced a chancel which might have been an alcove in a dining-room, if it had not been for an altar, furnished with some velvet cushions. Mr. Maxwell, too, in his surplice and black stole, and his hood, which profanely suggested the degree of a human University, seemed to Mrs. Jeffries as little like the possessor of any true priestly powers as he was like a possible object of the most passing female affection. He did not even intone. He did not even clasp his hands, so as to form with his fore-fingers a neat isosceles triangle. Prayer, as thus conducted, to her seemed beneath contempt. But the preacher, once in the pulpit, found the family pew attentive, especially as it was known that Glanville had privately suggested to him the propriety of addressing himself especially to intelligent and inquiring listeners: and to this it was immediately evident that Mr. Maxwell had assented, for before giving out his text he made the following short announcement:—

"As I have been honoured," he said in a mild, gentlemanly voice, "by being asked to deliver an address at the Ballyfergus Conference on the general position of revealed religion to-day, and the manner in which it may most fitly meet the laxity and infidelity of the age, I cannot do better than say briefly to you this morning what I propose to say to-morrow on the occasion that has just been mentioned by me."

Then having shocked Mrs. Jeffries still farther by kneeling and ejaculating a collect, instead of making a sign of the cross in space, he opened a manuscript contained in a limp black cover, spread it on the pulpit-cushion, gave a slight pull to his University hood, and began:—

"In the eighteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth verses, it is thus written: 'And Hezekiah gave him all the gold that was found in the house of the Lord. . . . At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.'

"The Christian mind," he proceeded, "or, as some prefer to call it, the Mind of the Church, must recognise that the true religion has gone through many vicissitudes and trials; and in order to read the lessons which God wishes to teach us by them, it recognises that we must read them carefully in the pages of man's history. But if we are to read these lessons aright, the first requisite is that the historians consulted by us shall be true ones—that there shall be nothing doubtful in their narratives, nothing unfair, nothing essential left out of them."

"He talks much better sense," murmured Mr.

Hancock, "than his appearance would have led one to expect."

"Now the only history," continued Mr. Maxwell, "of God's dealings with man, which covers any extended period, and is also indubitably accurate in every particular, is the history of God's dealings with the Chosen People and with their enemies as given us in the Old Testament; for the gospels stop short at the very beginning of His dealings with us under the new covenant. And if we desire, as Christians, to find guidance amongst the difficulties of the modern world, the dealings of God with Hezekiah, and with Hezekiah's contemporaries, are those which, at the present day, will give us the clearest lesson."

Mr. Maxwell then proceeded, somewhat to the dismay of his hearers, to analyse what he called the "mixed character" of the monarch who, when menaced by the Assyrians, endeavoured to buy them off by robbing the temple, instead of trusting to the arm, of Jehovah; and did not, till his enemies actually made an attack on him, betake himself to his true refuge.

"No sooner," said Mr. Maxwell, "had he adopted this sensible course, than he was, as we all know, well, and indeed signally, rewarded. The God of Israel, merely by His fatherly fiat, annihilated at a single blow the whole of the Assyrian army, killing in one night nearly two hundred thousand human beings, who were, humanly speaking, doing no more than their duty. When we think of this mercy, and of how little Hezekiah had deserved it, we see how truly long-suffering the Lord is, as well as how mighty. But with what difficulty did Hezekiah learn this great truth! And yet it was

one, we should be apt to say, which he might have learned easily—which we, had we been in his place, could hardly have helped learning; because only five years before he ascended his throne he had seen want of faith punished in a manner indeed amazing. When the Assyrians had carried away the Israelitish inhabitants of Samaria, the king of Assyria colonised that country with men of various races—men from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim; and the men of each race brought their own religion with them—the only religion with which they had any acquaintance. But, in spite of this last circumstance, which we with our lax ideas might hastily consider as extenuating, the Lord vindicated his divinity by sending, as Holy Scripture says, ‘lions among them, which slew some of them.’ Now if those who had never known the Lord could be thus punished for not trusting Him, Hezekiah might surely have realised how heinous was his own offence in failing to trust One whom already he knew so well, and in seeking to make peace with the enemy by surrendering Jehovah’s treasures. But oh, my Christian brethren, before we cast a stone at Hezekiah, on account of this act of sacrilege, let us look into our own hearts, and see if in these days we are not ourselves tempted to make peace with the enemies of the Church by a surrender of a similar but far more unpardonable kind.”

Mr. Maxwell, whose utterance hitherto had been a kind of drowsy sing-song, which allowed the rustle of his manuscript to be audible as he turned over its pages, here straightened himself. He looked up with a mild defiance, and proceeded at a brisker pace.

“In Hezekiah and the Jews,” he said, “we see

a type of the true Church—the custodian of the gospel message; and in the Assyrians, now taunting Hezekiah, now threatening him, we see a type of the enemies of the true Christian to-day. These enemies, as must also have been the case with the army of the king of Assyria, are divided into different companies, armed each with its own weapon of destruction. On the one hand, we have the avowed infidels, who attack the servants of Jehovah, so to speak, in the open. From these we have least to fear. We see them, and can wrest their feeble weapons from them. But far more dangerous than the infidels, because more insidious, are those who attack the gospel, disguised insidiously as its friends. I mean the emissaries of the lapsed Church of Rome—that Church which makes God's commandments of none effect through her traditions; which, instead of true prayer, gives us vain repetitions, most of them addressed not to God, but to erring creatures like ourselves; which turns the humble mother of the Lord's human body into a goddess; which makes justification an affair of sacramental charms, and degrades the spiritual meaning of the Lord's simple supper into a rite more blasphemous than any which the children of Sepharvaim and Hamath ever practised in the high places of Samaria.

“And now, dearly beloved brethren, let us ask ourselves very seriously, How do some of ourselves meet these enemies of Israel? Do not some of us endeavour to make our peace with them by surrendering, as Hezekiah did, the very treasures of the Lord's temple, the gold and silver of pure Church of England truth? Do not some of us go farther even than Hezekiah; and build, as the

Samaritans did, whom the lions of God slew, high places of idolatry in imitation of theirs?

"Alas!—and now I fear I must add more. I have said that the avowed infidel is less dangerous than the priest of the lapsed Church. Yes, and of the avowed infidel this is no doubt true. But have not we—even we—within the Church of England itself, traitors who are infidels at heart, though they wear the garments of Christ—who, whilst pretending to defend the Bible, the rock on which our faith is built, are doing with their disguised denials the work of the open enemy—who, instead of surrendering the simplicity of the gospel to the Assyrians of idolatrous Rome, are surrendering its divinity to the Assyrians of so-called science and scholarship—who surrender to the objector here the reality of a miracle, here a point of chronology, here the fulfilment of a prophecy, yes; and even the truth of God's own account of His creation of the world, and our first parents, itself, until at last all the treasures of the house of the Lord have gone?

"Oh, believe me, my dear brethren, in dealing with such enemies as these, the true Christian can act on one principle only, the principle of no surrender whatsoever. If we allow ourselves to deny the veracity, spiritual and historical, of any one sentence in Holy Scripture, we deny the authority of the whole. If we allow ourselves to disbelieve in the reality of any one biblical miracle, on the ground that it was too great a violation of the uniform laws of nature for any evidence to render reasonably probable, we shall end with disbelieving in the historical reality of all. If we allow ourselves to smile at the fiery chariot of Elijah, we shall end in smiling at the Ascension of our Lord's body.

One hardly ventures to contemplate a possibility so awful as that, but it is well to see the precipice on the edge of which some are walking. To doubt that the sun stood still at the bidding of Joshua is to doubt the miraculous darkness enshrouding the whole earth which marked the completion of the great vicarious sacrifice, and to doubt that darkness is to deny the sacrifice itself. Yes, dear brethren, let us pay to the Assyrians what bribes we will, they will not keep faith with us. Having taken away from us the gold and silver of the temple, they will assault us again, and they will raze the entire dwelling to the ground, unless, in our extremity, we at least learn true wisdom, and return to that revealed Jehovah who alone is powerful to save. We must not, indeed, look for a miracle in the old sense: but we live under a dispensation of special Divine providences. God no longer causes the moon to stand still in the valley of Ajalon; nor does He make dumb animals speak; nor does He prepare swimming monsters of the deep to preserve His appointed messengers; but He still, in direct answer to the prayers of His faithful people, gives or withholds the rain, so the earth may bring forth its harvest, and causes the pestilence to cease which He hath sent to chastise His chosen; and though it would be presumptuous, and indeed impious, to hope that our Father will in these days protect the convictions of His children by an actual slaughter of those who do not share them, yet His arm is not shortened, and He will, if we only trust Him, by some secret method of His own, cause the hosts of Assyria, with their weapons of false science, to disappear from before Jerusalem like a mist that melts in the morning."

The congregation thought for a moment that Mr. Maxwell had here ended. He could not, however, having got on the subject of miracles, resist the temptation to go back to them, and he accordingly proceeded to explain that miracles were of two kinds—one of which was performed by the direct agency of the Almighty, whilst the other involved the intervention of natural or secondary causes. The destruction of the Assyrians was a signal example of the first; the destruction of some of the Samaritans by the appointed lions, of the second. He elaborated these points at so great a length, that his blessing, when he came to give it, was received by some of his hearers with a thankfulness more devout than could be accounted for by even its intrinsic value; and the incompleteness of his success in retaining their full attention was illustrated by the fact that, on their leaving the sacred edifice, the first observation audible—it was addressed by one lady to another—was, “My dear, there’s a hook at the back of your dress unfastened. I’ve been noticing it all the time. Do let me put it right for you.”

But whatever disposition there might be amongst certain persons to think that they had had already enough preaching for a month, their views were changed when they encountered Canon Morgan in the library, who, having devoted the morning to correcting his own discourse, was dropping the ashes of a cigarette on a page of Professor Huxley’s *Essays*.

“Capital fellow, Huxley,” he said, as he closed the volume. “My dear Mr. Glanville, there was more Christianity in Huxley—— What? Are you going for a little walk before luncheon? Done with you. I’m your man.”

The whole bearing of the Canon formed a contrast so striking to that of Mr. Maxwell, which seemed drowsy with a confidence in the doctrines just preached by him from the pulpit, that the prospect of hearing the former express himself from the same place was soon felt to be almost exhilarating ; and he certainly did not disappoint the expectations which he had thus raised. It was regretted by some that Mr. Maxwell was not present to hear this second utterance of the Mind of the Church of England ; but he had returned in the launch directly after luncheon to Ballyfergus, in consequence of Mrs. Maxwell being, as he delicately expressed it, about to necessitate his ninth order for a perambulator.

Canon Morgan's official voice was one of great refinement ; and he read the prayers with a modulation so perfect, that he almost seemed to have arrested them on their way to heaven, in order that his earthly hearers might appreciate their full literary merit. His face, which as soon as he was in the pulpit was carefully scanned by his congregation, intellectual, shrewd, and flanked by mundane whiskers, derived from his surplice an admirably Christian expression, which elsewhere it perhaps lacked.

His text was a short one—"In the spirit, not in the letter."

"I am going," he began, in level and pleasant tones, "to set out with telling you something which, for many reasons, may startle you. But let me say, with Shakespeare, or, as some would have it, with Bacon—

"Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear."

Nor, indeed, was this injunction superfluous. The

Canon proceeded to give his astonished listeners an account of certain marvels accomplished by a modern medium, and compared four reports on them, made, as he said, by eye-witnesses. He took in order, and dwelt upon various crucial points with regard to which the reporters were in serious or even hopeless disagreement; and then explained that his story was nothing more than an allegory, which illustrated the discrepancies between the writers of the four gospels in their dealings with those miracles which the Churches, till recent times, had made the mistake of regarding as the foundation of the Christian faith. These miracles, he said, were far from being mere inventions. They were the natural products of a pious but unscientific imagination; and so long as men could believe them their symbolical value had been incalculable. The world, however, had now outgrown them. They were obstacles now, instead of being aids to faith; and the Churches which persisted in associating them with the life of their Divine Founder were really, so far as the world in general was concerned, tying a millstone round His neck and drowning Him in the depths of the sea. It was, he said, the glory of the Church of England to be so constituted that she could, from her own pulpits, free the truths of the faith from all temporary accretions, instead of leaving the work to those who are indifferent to the faith itself.

"I have said," continued the Canon, "that the spiritual authority of the Master would lose nothing by the process of dissociating Him from miraculous legend. Lose, did I say? Will it not rather gain, as a precious statue would gain, if denuded of tinsel or drapery; or as the moon gains in lustre when she shows us her clear brilliance,

emerging from banks of clouds whose edges she has been long silvering? Yes," said the Canon, his tone becoming more appealing, "let us be just. The moon does silver the very clouds that hide her; and the character of the Master has irradiated with a pearl-like beauty the legends which, by a natural process, have gathered round His divine life. Yes, but let us remember this. It is not the marvels of legend that have made that life adorable. It is the divine life that for a time has rendered the marvels credible. To rid our minds, therefore, of the latter—or to retain them only as symbols which still have a language for the imagination—is for us the supreme act at once of faith and reverence, by which we shall, in reality, instead of being separated from the Lord, be drawn nearer to Him than we ever were drawn before. True religion, true faith, true Christianity, is not an assent to propositions. It is trust in a person."

"I have every sympathy," said Lord Restormel to Lady Snowdon, "with a parson who gives up his living and attacks the Church like a man. I've none with an apostle like our friend, who betrays it with a slobbering kiss."

"You," the Canon went on, "whom I am now addressing, have probably all felt that what hindered you from approaching the Lord more closely was precisely this barrier of miracles, in the now incredible sense of the word; but let us once get rid of this false idea of miracles, and we find that we have got rid of miracles only to make place for a miracle—the holy and undivided miracle of God's great Universe—in which man for us is the image of God Himself, and the man Christ is the divine image of Humanity. Think of the sublime conception of

things which thus emerges glowing before us. The whole Universe stands revealed to us in its grand process of evolution ; and as the climax of this evolution, as its central cosmic flower, stands the figure of Him who is the Founder of the religion which we still profess—a figure not unnaturally begotten, as the Indians fable about Gautama, but divinely, that is to say naturally, evolved. ‘What,’ asks Auguste Sabatier, the great leader of Protestant thought in France, ‘what is nature in its expansion and its evolution—what is it but the very expression and will of the Father?’”

“Fudge,” muttered Mr. Hancock. “He doesn’t even know what the word ‘evolution’ means.”

“Let us only grasp these ideas,” the Canon was now saying, “and we shall see that the very dogmas of Christianity come to life again in a transfigured form. We shall see our evolved Master crucified for our sakes in the sorrows which He shared with all of us, buried in the flesh as we shall be buried likewise, and risen again in the undying example which He has given us, as we also, let us pray, may in due time rise for others.”

Thus, the Canon proceeded to explain to his hearers, the creeds still remained for us precious and indestructible documents, to which, in their new sense, any Christian minister—at all events, any minister of our grand national Church—might subscribe fearlessly with a sort of transfigured honesty. He might, indeed, not only subscribe to all the articles which the creeds contain, but he might add another article to them, which would improve and complete the rest. The creeds bade us believe that the Master had personally ascended. He indeed had done so, not by being physically levitated, but by

accompanying the Church, through His influence, in the course of its upward progress. We might now therefore add to our belief in the ascension of the Founder a farther belief in the ascension of the Church itself. The imagination of our forefathers had symbolised the Church as a Bride. We now discerned that not symbolically, but sociologically, it was indeed a living body. It was a social organism in an age-long condition of growth, and its ascension consisted in that very process which seemed to timid souls its dissolution and ruin. This, said the Canon, was the process to which he had already referred: of casting away all legends and dogmas as understood in the sense which they were originally meant to bear; and he wound up with an impassioned and eloquent prophecy of the glorious future, which by this sacred means the Mind of the Church of England was preparing for the Church in general. "The Church," said the Canon, "is no longer the foe of science, or of the evolution which science reveals to us. The gaze of knowledge mixes with her gaze of love; and lo, even as we look, the divine body rises—if we once more may have recourse to the symbolism of primitive legend—and is removed from our sight, nay, not in a cloud, but in the blaze of universal life with which she has become one."

The Canon's discourse had affected his different hearers differently. "I never heard," said Mr. Hancock into his hat, as he reproduced unconsciously a devotional attitude of his youth, "I never heard such a tissue of trash as that last part in my life." Lady Snowdon, with a sarcastic smile, had made notes of parts of it on the fly-leaf of an Apocrypha; whilst Mrs. Jeffries, who was be-

wildered by the beginning of it, and indescribably shocked by the middle, was partially soothed by her failure to comprehend the end. She was not, however, comfortable till—the party having left the church and betaken themselves to the terrace, where tea was already awaiting them—her eyes encountered an object which made her heart palpitate so as actually to cause a commotion amongst the folds of the blouse that covered it. “Ah,” she exclaimed, pressing her troubled corset with the daintiest of grey gloves, “there he is ! There’s Father Skipton.”

CHAPTER III

GLANVILLE, on hearing this, hastened forward to meet the stranger, who was slowly coming towards them from the far end of the terrace. Seen from a distance, he resembled an alpaca umbrella-case, being covered with a species of cassock, which round his waist was tied by a tasselled cord. He was limping slightly, and was resting one of his hands on the neck of a large-eyed boy—a son of one of the gardeners—who was carrying an oblong parcel for him.

On Glanville's approach he lifted a broad-brimmed hat, and alike in his smile and greeting exhibited, to the latter's surprise, all the manner of a self-possessed and well-bred gentleman. Father Skipton had, indeed, in his University days, been renowned at Cambridge as an actor of ladies' parts in theatricals, and the gleaming eyes which gave light to his now attenuated face seemed still, though they only seemed, to have an artificial darkness under them.

"This kind lad of yours," he said, "has guided me and carried my kit. May I ask him to take it to the vestry, as your church, I believe, is close by? Thank you, dear fellow," he added, patting the boy's cheek. "Run along, then. That boy, Mr. Glanville, looks for all the world as if he was born to serve at Mass: and he has eyes which seem as though they were always looking at Our Lady."

"Come and sit down," said Glanville, ignoring the observation. "You must be tired. Why, you're positively limping."

"I'm afraid," replied the Father, with an almost gay laugh, "that my Order is one that won't let us boil our peas. I hope, Mr. Glanville," he continued, "you won't think me an unconscionable intruder, but as every Schism-shop in the United Kingdom is sending some representative to this Conference, our Superior has asked me to make a protest on behalf of Catholic truth: so I welcomed, indeed sought, an opportunity of putting in an oar here too. Also, Mr. Glanville—and here the murder comes out—we are enjoined, wherever this is feasible, to supplement our services by sending the hat round afterwards. It's not always pleasant—this pocket-picking part of the business—but still——"

"My good friend," said Glanville, touched by the Father's embarrassment, "I'll collect for you, and give you the proceeds afterwards. And now refresh yourself. You look ready to faint—and here's Mrs. Jeffries—an old and devoted admirer."

The Father's condition, indeed, when observed closely, was painful. His whole nervous system seemed tremulous with some chronic excitement, and half of his thoughts, it was evident, were far away. Mrs. Jeffries, however, who was presently clasping both his hands in her own, and was pouring the rays of her eyes over his modestly averted face, apparently exercised a soothing influence over him. When he was asked if he would have some tea-cake, he replied almost coquettishly, "I should love some"; and he joined in the conversation of the party with a subdued, but unaffected, ease. At length Mrs. Jeffries, after an interchange

of certain signs and whispers with him, turned to Glanville and said, "I think he'd like me to show him the church, and should you object to my asking your butler for some candles? The service won't be long. If we have it at seven, it will be over before dressing-time, and some of them can have, as they want to have, a game of bridge between-whiles."

Glanville promised that everything should be precisely as the Father wished, and the Father and his disciple went off together accordingly.

As seven o'clock approached, from the ultra-Protestant tower a bell was being skilfully tinkled in a manner that suggested Italy, and the visitors once again entered the great pew. The body of the church was now filled with twilight, but the congregation found itself confronted by a singular spectacle which at once made all its members feel they had done well in coming. This was the transfigured chancel. The altar, and the altar alone, was shining with a constellation of lights, and Glanville recognised an array of his own dining-room candlesticks, whose intended use he had, indeed, vaguely suspected, when he extracted them from the care of his unwilling but unsuspecting butler.

There was for a minute or two a solemn and expectant silence, broken only by a whisper from Miss Hagley to Captain Jeffries, "It's exactly like a Christmas tree," and by his reply, a trifle louder than was decorous, "My poor old father would turn in his grave to see this." Then before the chancel steps a figure was seen to move, as though some *religieuse* were lifting herself from absorbed devotion; and another figure emerged from the vestry door, on whose white, bewildering vestments was a glimmer of vague embroideries—a figure which

first turned to the dining-room candlesticks, subsiding before them in a deep, prolonged genuflection; and then rose, and advancing, stationed itself on the chancel-step. Here it raised an arm, and began in a high voice, "In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus sancti—in nomine Matris Dei, immaculatae, semper Virginis, atque Omnium Sanctorum. Amen." Then, to the relief of the excited and bewildered audience, Father Skipton dropped into the language of his native country, though without altering either the pitch of his voice or his intonation.

"I propose presently to say to you a few words on behalf of an Order which represents more fully than any other the true spirit of the Anglo-Catholic Church. The Order I refer to is the Confraternity of our Blessed Lady, its main object being to save our beloved country from the infidel criticism and the false knowledge of to-day, by renewing to Her, the most pitiful protectress of souls, that tribute of true devotion, of which she has been so long defrauded. But before I speak farther about this point, I will ask you to join me in certain acts of worship which, though not specifically provided for in that Book of Common Prayer, which our holy ordination vows bind us to accept as our guide, are yet so entirely in accordance with its whole spirit that they may be said to be written by implication between the lines of its articles and of its rubrics. First join with me, then, in the Litany of the Seven Sacraments."

Having said this, he dropped on his knees where he was, and ejaculated the names of the sacraments in quick succession, beginning with "Sacrament of the Font, save us," and ending with "Sacrament of

Extreme Unction, save us." Then rising to his feet, "Join with me now," he said, "in the Litany of Mary of England." Meanwhile Father Skipton had turned, and kneeling at one end of the altar, was chanting, "O vase of luscious spiritual honey, pray that the savour of all human knowledge may be bitter to us, and make our tongues moist with thine ineffable and most dear sweetness." Father Skipton had a genius for the concrete which no saint of the Roman Communion could ever have aspired to equal; and presently, following a manual of his own composition, he was exclaiming, "Hands of Mary, which drip with myrrh, fondle us!" when a sudden response was made for the first time from the pew, the words of which, to say the truth, were more devotional than its manner. It consisted of two simultaneous exclamations of "Good heavens!" accompanied by a stamp of two pairs of impatient feet; and Lord Restormel and Mr. Hancock both made a noisy exit. "It's Rome," exclaimed Mr. Hancock, "pure, unadulterated Rome." "It's Rome," replied Lord Restormel, "adulterated in a negative way, by the absence of every principle that has held the Church of Rome together, and has made of Transubstantiation a philosophically conceivable process."

Meanwhile Father Skipton within had reached another stage of his proceedings. "And lastly," he was saying, "join with me in the adoration of the Absent Host—absent from our altars now, but not to be absent long. Let us make," he said, "a monstrance in our minds, and let us place it upon the High Altar." Here he turned, and sinking before the embroidered medallion of the altar-cloth, began, "O creatures of flour and water,

which, consecrated by the powers truly transmitted from the apostles to the clergy of the Church of England, are the maker and the redeemer of our souls, we adore you. O wafer which wast before all worlds, we adore thee. O almighty wafer, which didst create the Universe and each living species, and suspendest at thy will the laws which thou thyself didst make, we adore thee."

Over the occupants of the pew, as Father Skipton proceeded, his voice at every fresh adjective quivering with increased intensity, a feeling gradually stole which was scarcely less intense than his own. One after another they rose, and quickly left the church. Glanville alone remained, waiting to catch the end. It came sooner than he expected. Before Father Skipton had come to the close of his Litany, the strength of his emotions overcame him, and he seemed to collapse sobbing. At the same instant the *religieuse*, who had still been kneeling before the chancel, hastened forward, and placed herself at the Father's side. Glanville, as quickly as he could, made his way to the spot himself, and there he found Mrs. Jeffries holding her pastor's hands. On Glanville's approach, Father Skipton pulled himself together with an effort. He stood up, and, still half dazed, was led by the others into the vestry. There, in a short time, he resumed his normal condition, and with it came back a touch of his old ease and urbanity. "What a fellow I am," he exclaimed, as they helped him off with his vestments, "to break down in this positively absurd way! Humiliating as it is to confess, I must have rather overdone myself walking. I fear I am hardly up to even my little mite of a sermon."

"Never mind," said Glanville, "we'll consider

your sermon preached, especially as I did the collecting before you began your service; and not to trouble you with a pocketful of silver and sovereigns, it's my privilege to hand you this ten-pound note for your Order."

Father Skipton thanked him with eyes that were full of amazed gratitude; whilst Mrs. Jeffries, who was much moved also, brought her drooping head so near to the Father's shoulder that two precious tears were left on his sacred garment; and with reverent solicitude having then helped him to walk, she left behind her in the vestry a strong smell of Parma violets.

Of all the exponents of the Mind of the Church of England, Father Skipton was the one who had produced the most poignant impression. All his hearers, with the exception of Mrs. Jeffries and Canon Morgan, had been reduced by his performances to a condition of mild melancholy. Miss Hagley was heard observing with much frankness at dinner, "I'd a great deal rather be a Holy Roman at once." The Canon contented himself with saying, "He's a queer customer." Glanville, however, took the bull by the horns, and having placed the Father next himself, questioned him with regard to his Order, and the general position of the ritualists whom he and his Order represented. "What, then," he asked at last, "prevents you from joining the Church of Rome? You reproduce her practices; you appropriate every one of her doctrines."

The Father, who had hitherto been replying with a sweet meekness, here sniffed, and exhibited a spirit that seemed to be almost irritable. "The doctrines and the practices to which I presume that you allude," he said, "are ours by right as much as,

or even more, than they are hers. Still, if you care to put it so, we do adhere to her doctrines ; but what we protest against to the death is the absurd claim to authority on which Rome professes to base them. I assure you, Mr. Glanville, next to the authority of our own bishops, the most despicable thing in our eyes is that of the Pope himself. Ah," he said, indulging himself in a half-glass of champagne, "this reminds me of the old days at Trinity."

BOOK IV

THE WORLD TO THE CHURCH

CHAPTER I

SIR RODERICK and his party had gone. Canon Morgan and Father Skipton had gone. Sir Roderick's yacht, the *Phryne*, had duly arrived towards the end of last night's dinner, and carried them all away on the quiet of its moonlit deck, Mrs. Jeffries receiving a current of spiritual comfort from the clasp of Father Skipton's hand, as they sat together above the throbbing screw; and now the others, in a nook of the seaward garden, where the leisurely warmth of the afternoon was tempered by spreading trees, were collected together for the purpose of entering on their first conference.

A stranger who knew their purpose would certainly, as Glanville had put it, have been tempted to call them a company of theologians in disguise; and the serious nature of the subject that lay before them produced in some a certain sense of hesitancy, as though they were doubtful about the tone which would best suit the occasion. Mr. Hancock, however, who had appeared a moment ago, looking very happy and dapper in a new suit of grey tweed, and carrying in his hand a little bundle of papers, was evidently in no uncertainty; and on Lady Snowdon's suggesting that he should, to his duties as secretary, add those of a sort of informal chairman, everyone else very gladly agreed.

"Sit down there, then," said Lady Snowdon, with a placid air of command. "That is the secretary's table. Everything has been got ready for you."

Mr. Hancock, who at all events had the merit of decision, at once struck what to him seemed the proper spiritual keynote by giving the table a few facetious raps with a pencil. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "may I ask if you are all ready? Then, in that case, I declare our first conference opened. And now let me remind you that this conference is to be one of a little series of conferences. We are proposing to discuss a separate question in each; and in each we must do our best to keep strictly to our immediate point. Let me, then, put clearly before you what our opening question is. As you all know, and have agreed, our subject this afternoon is to be Christianity. Well, Christianity is a subject about which, yesterday and the day before, we, privileged people, heard so much and so many things, that we may be excused if we find it necessary to define what we really mean by it. We will, then, begin with defining what we mean by the thing; and we next will define clearly the questions which we mean to ask about it. First, then, for the thing. Some people mean by Christianity merely the moral appeal which the teaching of Christ makes to us. We are not this afternoon going to touch upon this at all."

"In that case," said Mrs. Vernon, "it seems to me, Mr. Hancock, that we are going to leave the essence of Christianity out."

"If such is your opinion," said Mr. Hancock, "I am glad. You will run no risk of being offended by anything we may have to say. We shall put this essence—this personal appeal of Christianity, which

many people find so moving—on one side, well out of harm's way, and confine ourselves exclusively to the consideration of certain alleged events which the Christian Churches associate with it, and from which, Sunday by Sunday, they declare it to be absolutely inseparable. Of these events Mr. Glanville and I have made a list, reducing them to a minimum. They resolve themselves into four groups. Let me read the short list out to you.

“First group.—The first man and woman, from whom all the human race descends, came into the world perfect, and seeing God face to face ; but on some particular day of some particular year, at some particular place in Asia, this lonely couple chose to do something or other which plunged them from a state of perfection into one of sorrow and wickedness. In this condition they began to propagate children, and transmitted to all their descendants the curses they had drawn down on themselves.

“Second group.—From the date of the Fall for at least two thousand years, the human race as it multiplied went from bad to worse, and the primal religion was very nearly forgotten, when God picked out a single Asiatic household, and made a new revelation of Himself, in strictest confidence, to the head of it.

“Third group.—As the household in question grew into a small tribe, God constantly interfered for its convenience with the ordinary course of nature, and also continued to it His supernatural confidences. These were recorded, under His own immediate direction, in a series of writings known as the Old Testament, whose authority differs in kind from that of all similar writings. They give us God's own account of the origin of the human race, and also contain a number of emphatic, though obscure pre-

dictions, that some fuller revelation was in course of time to follow.

“Fourth group.—After another period of about two thousand years, during which the mass of mankind was left groping in its natural darkness, this ulterior revelation was accomplished by an act even more astounding than the creation of the Universe itself. The Creator of the Universe assumed the form of a man, becoming through a mortal mother the immortal father of Himself. In this condition He died the death of a thief, for the sake of the disastrous victims of His first creative experiment. He then came to bodily life again, and taking His body with Him, visibly rose in the air, deserting the earth’s surface, and somehow or other, in some unexplained way, permanently united this body, which had lately been eating broiled fish, to the spiritual and eternal Omnipotence which created the stars and will survive them.

“Well,” continued Mr. Hancock, “the Christianity of the creeds and Churches differs only from some form of natural theism, because it obstinately asserts that these four groups of events—to say nothing of others—are actual, literal, objective facts of history; and it is this distinctive, this challenging assertion, made by all the Churches, which we mean now by Christianity. So much, then, for the thing which is to form the subject of our discussions. Let us now define the question which we are going to ask about it. We are going, as we have agreed already, to put it in the following way. Whereas so lately as fifty years ago the above events were believed in by the great mass of educated people, the number of educated people who do not believe in them any longer is now so large and so widely distributed,

that their conduct cannot be due to chance or mere private perversity. To what causes is it due, then, since it is not due to these?"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Brompton. "Mr. Glanville, that summary was admirable."

"I am," said Lady Snowdon, "by no means so sure of that. In one case, at all events, I thought things were put too crudely. My Roman Catholic brother—in our family we have several religions and irreligions—was always quoting the opinion of St. Augustine that the story of Adam and the apple was only true allegorically."

"Yes," said Glanville, "but he meant that under the allegory lay a definite historical fact, which he not only did not try to get out of, but on which, like the Church in general, he deliberately built his whole scheme of theology. This is the fact that, as Mr. Hancock has just read out, the whole human race descends from a single couple who were originally perfect, but who ceased to be so at some definite date, and that all the evil in man, and all the discords in nature, are as literally due to this historical act as an octoroon's curly hair is due to some infusion of negro blood. Well, let us begin here. The modern world—or at any rate a considerable section of it—has become incapable during the past fifty years of believing that any event of the kind ever took place at all, partly for a reason to which I will come back presently, but mainly——"

"Forgive me," interposed Mrs. Vernon, "but may I, before you go on, say something? For I can't help feeling that all this is aimed at me. I'm not a theologian, but I do know something of the views held by ordinary well-educated Christians, and many of these things which you describe as essential to

Christianity are certainly not held by educated Christians any longer. I mean the story of the Fall and the apple; yes, and I mean the story of Abraham also. Only people like Mr. Maxwell, who of course is behind the times, and perhaps toy Roman Catholics like that ridiculous Father, cling to things like these. The Bishop of Glastonbury doesn't, who is a sensible, dry High Churchman; and, now I come to think of it, I saw the other day that Canon Driver, who is a great Anglican scholar, doubts if such a person as Abraham ever really existed. So I don't think you're treating the Christianity of the Churches fairly when you say that it stands or falls with the truth of your first two groups of events."

"Well," said Glanville, "and what is your opinion as to the third group—the subsequent miracles which signalised Jewish history, and the miraculous inspiration of the books in which these miracles are recorded, together with the stories of Adam's fall, and of Abraham?"

"Don't ask *me*," said Mrs. Vernon, "as if I set up for an authority. I had better refer you to the Bishop and to people like the late Dean Farrar. And then there's Professor Harnack, who says just the same things; and—yes, Mr. Glanville, I knew there was something else. I cut an article out of the *Times* this morning—it was my own copy, not one of yours—which gives an account of the opinions of the Abbé Loisy, one of the most learned Roman Catholics in Europe, about the miracles of the Old Testament."

"Loisy!" exclaimed Mr. Brompton. "That man will join us. Mark my words—that man will join the Ethical Church. Have you got, Mrs. Vernon, the cutting from the *Times* with you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon. "There, Mr. Glanville, take it."

"I am well acquainted," said Glanville, "with the Abbé Loisy's writings. They are interesting, not because they give us any new results, but because they show us how the results of that heretical criticism, which for the last forty years the orthodox Churches have been denouncing, are reached independently by even the most ardent Catholic, the moment he applies to the Bible the tests of ordinary scholarship. Well, let us look at this summary. I'll read you those conclusions of the Abbé which bear on the Old Testament. 'The Pentateuch, in its present form, cannot have been the work of Moses.' 'The first chapters of Genesis do not contain the true and exact history of the origin of mankind.' 'The teachings of the Bible in respect to natural science do not rise above the notions prevalent in antiquity, and these notions have left their mark on biblical religious doctrine.'"

"I repeat it," said Mr. Brompton, "that man will join us. He will join the Ethical Church. He is bound to break with Rome."

"Apparently," said Mrs. Vernon, "he doesn't himself think so. He doesn't himself see that any of these opinions are inconsistent with anything in miraculous Christianity which is vital."

"No," said Mr. Brompton triumphantly, "but the Church of Rome does."

"I'm not talking," said Mrs. Vernon, "about the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome, as we all know, and as you know, would say anything. I'm talking of honest, open-minded men, like the Abbé himself, whose breach with Rome does him credit—if he comes to London I shall certainly ask him to

dinner—men like the Bishop of Glastonbury, the late Dean of Canterbury, Canon Driver, and Dr. Sanday. They all of them say that these Old Testament miracles—which, of course, it's easy to make fun of—have nothing whatever to do with the vital miracles of Christianity; and that even if we find ourselves unable to believe in any one of them, the Old Testament itself is just as much inspired as ever."

"If that's the case," said Glanville, "our discussion is considerably simplified. With regard to the first three of our four groups of events, we need no longer ask for the reason why a part of the world rejects them. On behalf both of the world and the Church we may set them aside altogether. The fourth group, in that case, will be all that need engage our attention. These are the miraculous birth, the resurrection, and ascension of Christ."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "I suppose those are all that really matter. Indeed, the Bishop himself said as much in the little address he gave us."

"Our question, then," said Glanville, "narrows itself down to the question of why large numbers of men are beginning to reject these. Now in order to discuss why men are beginning to reject them, we must first consider the grounds which have led men to accept them. Since you, Mrs. Vernon, are not a Roman Catholic, and since, like most Protestants, you think that the Church of Rome would say anything, you will admit that the main ground on which these particular miracles have been accepted is the documentary evidence contained in the New Testament."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "certainly. And here everything's different. However convinced we may be that Adam and Abraham are myths, the principal

figure in the gospels was, at all events, an actual person."

"No doubt," said Glanville; "and the most sceptical thinker admits that the gospels in many respects give us an accurate sketch of Him. The gospels, however, when submitted to the same impartial criticism that your friends accept so candidly when applied to the Old Testament, are found, within limits, to suffer in a similar way. They, too, are found to be patchworks of various documents, and the various dates of these and their various discrepancies as to detail show that as records of detailed and minute occurrences the gospels in all their parts are not of the same value. As to many of the incidents narrated, the discrepancies are less marked than the agreements, and prove rather than disprove the substantial truth of the narrative; but as to certain others, the exact reverse is the case: and these other incidents happen to be precisely those which orthodox Christianity regards as most sure and important. Amongst them, to begin with, is the miraculous birth of Christ. In the earlier versions of the gospels all mention of this fact is wanting; nor was it so much as suspected by the early Church itself. So indubitable has this become that orthodox scholars of to-day have been driven to suppose that the Church learnt it first from the Virgin Mother, who revealed it in her old age. And now let us go on to the two other great events—the Resurrection and Ascension. Here my task is simple, for I merely have to refer you to the sermon preached to us yesterday by that mouthpiece of the Mind of the Church, the ingenious Canon Morgan. I hope, Mrs. Vernon, that you listened to it."

"I did," said Mrs. Vernon, "and I've been think-

ing of it ever since ; and it went beyond the bounds of decency. I'm all for treating things liberally, just as much as the Bishop is, and the Abbé Loisy, and Canon Driver. But Canon Morgan, instead of trying to disprove a doctrine, tried merely to make it ridiculous by giving us a profane burlesque of it, which had nothing to do with the details of the matter at all."

"Poor Canon Morgan!" said Glanville. "You wrong him greatly. He oughtn't to say what he does, making clerical faces at us over a pulpit-cushion ; but he wasn't—can you possibly think he was?—trying to give us a burlesque. In his story of the medium and the four writers who dealt with her, he merely gave us a series of minute and homely equivalents to the differences between the four gospels in their accounts of certain events which, from motives of decorum, he preferred to treat indirectly. I dare say, Mrs. Vernon, you may not have noticed that the evangelists are not in agreement even as to the day of the last supper. Three of them give it as Friday, the Feast of the Passover. The fourth emphatically gives it as the Thursday before the feast ; whilst as to the final event—the crowning event of the Ascension—you probably remember one detail at any rate. The disciples were told to look for their risen Lord in Galilee—a journey of some days from Jerusalem. Well, the only account of the incident which is given in any detail, is that given by Luke ; and according to him, when did it happen and where ? As to the when—it happened on the very day of the Resurrection ; and as to the where—it happened close by, at Bethany. Look in your own New Testament, and see if he is not right. After all,

the matter of what he said is the important thing, not the manner. Or if the Canon offends you, turn to the Abbé Loisy, whose conclusions, you seem to think, affect the Old Testament only. He admits that the narratives of the New Testament, just as much as those of the Old, were written with a 'freedom'—by which he means disregard of detail—'unknown to modern history,' and that we must, in estimating their value, use a corresponding freedom ourselves. Can you wonder that many people, if they adopt the Abbé's principles, should refuse to take the narratives of the Resurrection and the Ascension seriously?"

"The Abbé," replied Mrs. Vernon, "nevertheless believes in them himself. He doesn't think that his principles even tend to render them doubtful."

"No," said Mr. Brompton; "but let me say once more, the Church of Rome does. My late Church, Mrs. Vernon, is the keenest judge in the world of the meaning of principles and discoveries, in so far as they relate to faith. You can't trust her for a moment as to what opinions are true; but you can trust her implicitly as to what discoveries are fatal to miraculous Christianity."

"I can't, of course," said Mrs. Vernon, "answer all this myself; and I suppose that the mere literary evidences, if we take them quite by themselves, are weaker than they were even once thought to be. Still, I can't help feeling that somehow there's a sort of a something to be said in answer to all this. I was once told by a friend of mine to read Dr. Sanday's writings, as he put the case for belief in an absolutely convincing way. I couldn't do so at the time, because I had to go to Ascot; but I think his notion is this—that if we turn to the gospels, and feel what

the personal work and character of Christ were, we shall find ourselves surrounded by an atmosphere of wonder and reverence; and all sorts of things will become credible, such as the Resurrection, and the Ascension, and the miraculous connection between the Old Testament and the New, which in cold blood we should laugh at."

"I have," said Glanville, "though I gather that Mrs. Vernon has not, read some of Dr. Sanday's writings. I will tell her presently one or two of his conclusions. Meanwhile, let me say that I quite understand his argument. An overwhelming reverence for a great moral teacher does predispose the mind—as we see in the cases of Buddha, of Zoroaster, or of Mahomet—to associate his life with events as abnormal and impressive as his character; and Dr. Sanday means that, by dwelling on the character of Christ, facts and events such as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the whole scheme of Redemption, assume a probability which strengthens what would otherwise be worthless evidence. Here at once we get upon different ground; but it is ground which, as we shall see, has been undermined already. The events which Dr. Sanday invites us to regard as probable, are probable, and, indeed, intelligible, only as parts of events still larger. The asserted probability is the probability of the Incarnation and the divine Redemption. But now let us ask, On what grounds are these probable? They cannot be probable on the ground of Christ's human goodness. This, of itself, would tend to show, on the contrary, that man could redeem himself, rather than that he needed to be redeemed. The probability, the whole meaning of these two events, rests altogether on the assumption that man

is the moral victim of some primæval catastrophe—that he was once perfect, and that somehow he lost perfection. The Redemption, in fact, means nothing without the Fall. Well—as even men like the Abbé Loisy admit—no such catastrophe ever really occurred. As we all of us know to-day, the history of the human race has been the history, not of a fall from high to low, but of a very gradual rise from the low to the comparatively high. With the rapid spread of this piece of modern and revolutionary knowledge the very meaning of such an incident as our redemption by God's sacrifice of Himself has, in the opinion of a vast number of people, disappeared; and, for them, the probability of it has collapsed even more completely than the evidence. I am not insisting that the people in question are right. I am trying to keep within the limits of the task we have set ourselves—namely, to show you that, even if these people are mistaken, their mistake is one which rests upon very intelligible grounds. I am, indeed, so far from saying that these grounds alone would be conclusive, that unless there were others in the background, of a yet more important kind, I doubt if I should consider them as altogether conclusive myself."

"What," exclaimed Mr. Brompton, in a tone of scandalised dismay, "what can you want more? In all conscience this is conclusive enough."

"There is," said Glanville, "a reason for the rejection of miraculous Christianity, incomparably more operative with the world than any collapse either of the documentary evidence in its favour, the scientific impossibility of its fundamental assumptions as to mankind, or the consequent collapse of the internal coherence of its system. I propose in a

minute or two to put this reason before you in a way almost as unusual as the Canon's parable of the medium. But first let me turn once more to the Abbé Loisy, and point out that this account of his views winds up with one which we have not as yet noticed. 'The Church, with her dogmas,' so the Abbé maintains, 'follows upon the gospel of Jesus, but is not formally in the gospel.' Your late Church, Mr. Brompton, as this statement reminds us, is mistress of a means by which she might still defend her doctrines, without logical absurdity, in the face of mere biblical criticism. She enjoys a profound advantage which, in all other Churches, is wanting. This is the authority attached by her to her own organised traditions. The Mind of the Church, as the Bishop of Glastonbury understands it, is a cloud—never of the same shape in two pulpits at once. It can't even agree with itself that it has any real existence. But the Roman Church seems from the very beginning to have been unconsciously preparing herself for the day when the old objective evidences should lose their independent force. She has supplied herself theoretically with the means of being herself the evidence of these. Instead of declaring that she is true because she agrees with the Bible, she declares that the Bible is true because it agrees with her. I mention this because it has a direct bearing on that farther and that deeper reason for the disbelief of to-day, which I am going to point out presently."

"Yes," said Mr. Brompton, "this corporate and organised infallibility, which turns its traditions into a kind of miraculous memory, and its inventions into a miraculous insight, is, as you say, in theory, the strength of my late Church. In practice it is

her supreme weakness. Protestantism is a raft of logs. Break this up, and each log for a time may support a swimmer. But the Barque of Peter is a vessel built of tin. Make one hole in it anywhere, and down it goes to the bottom."

"Very well put," said Mr. Hancock, "very well put indeed."

"And now," said Glanville, "I'm going to make an observation of a practical, not of a theoretical, kind. In twenty minutes it will be tea-time. I've ordered tea at the other end of the garden, and what I propose is that we finish our discussion there. Meanwhile we'll have an interval for mental as well as for physical refreshment, and I'll show you now, if you'll come with me, my collection of antiquities in that building behind the fuchsias. You notice, Mrs. Vernon, that my museum adjoins the church which was echoing yesterday with Mr. Maxwell's disquisitions on Hezekiah, and which witnessed Father Skipton's mimicries of the abominations of the Spiritual Samaria."

CHAPTER II

GLANVILLE'S proposal, though its abruptness created some surprise, was by no means disagreeable to his friends. The door of the museum was ajar, as though expecting their advent, and they made their way into the somewhat musty interior with pleased feelings of curiosity. The walls were lined with shelves, supporting many dust-covered objects which, as Glanville observed cursorily, had been brought from Italy by the Bishop. It was evidently not these that the party had been asked to look at, but two other collections, which occupied the floor of the building, and were raised for inspection on brand-new wooden platforms.

"Here on the right," said Glanville, "are the results of my labours in Asia Minor. We'll take these first, and those on the left afterwards. These things came from a Græco-Roman watering-place, of which I am the first explorer. Some of them have merely an architectural interest. I want you to look at the others, which illustrate domestic life. I found them in two houses which were covered up by a landslip. Look at these pans and strainers; look at this pair of tongs; and these two ingenious weighing-machines; at these hand mirrors, and these beautiful little pots, which still have inside them a few grains of tooth-powder; and then, again, look at these painted panels. The

pictures are dim and damaged, but still, you can make out there a party lying at dinner, and there the corner of a garden. These things take us back some seventeen hundred years."

"And it seems," said Mrs. Vernon, trying to smell the tooth-powder, "as if we could almost shake hands with the people who lived across that gulf of time."

"Well," said Glanville, when his party had finished their inspection, "let us now take the things opposite. Here, I am sorry to say, we have models and copies only: but they are all absolutely accurate."

The chief spectacle which they were now invited to contemplate was a large and beautiful model of some intricate building, with roofless but painted walls, whilst behind it were full-sized facsimiles of some of the mural pictures. Glanville pointed out to his friends the skilful disposition of the rooms, the courts, offices, and cellars, and the maze of galleries connecting them. He called attention also to the elaborate system of drainage, which suggested the latest work of the sanitary engineers of London. "And now," he said, "look at the pictures. What do you think of these? That street of marble houses, with the sea and masts at the end of it, might almost represent some southern town of to-day. These things are better than those which we looked at first. Mrs. Vernon, don't you think so?"

"Yes," she said, repeating what had already been said by the others; "but these, whatever they are, must be much more modern than the others. Is this some place which the Spaniards built in America?"

"That," said Glanville, "is the great palace at Knossos. It belongs to a civilisation which was

flourishing before God created Adam. But if we wish to have our tea, I mustn't keep you waiting here. I've something more to show you, to which this is only a preface. I was telling my friend Mr. Seaton that I had a sort of Bluebeard's chamber here in the orangery below the terrace. We'll go through it on our way to the tea-things."

His friends, feeling themselves hustled rather more than was necessary, were presently being taken by him down a broad flight of steps, which brought them to a door in a pillared and balustraded wall.

"I'm afraid," said Glanville, as he turned the handle, "you'll find yourselves cramped at first." Nor indeed were his words unjustified. Their view, on entering, was impeded by a glass partition, which crossed the building only six feet from the door, and the confined space in which they were thus imprisoned was rendered still less commodious by the presence of a dwarf wall, dividing the oblong compartment into two parallel strips, of which that nearest the door was barely two feet wide. Into this strip the visitors managed to squeeze themselves, whilst their host unlocked a wicket which gave access to the strip beyond; but before releasing his captives he begged them to take notice that at one end of their pen was a little shelf, on which stood a plaster crucifix, jostling a miniature model of a new cathedral in America. Then admitting them into the broader of the two areas, he called their attention to a longer but similar shelf, which, somewhat to their disappointment, was occupied by a rough and reduced duplicate of the model of the palace of Knossos, from which he had just hurried them. "I've no doubt," said Glanville, "you think this a poor exhibition, but wait till you have grasped its meaning. That

crucifix stands about twenty-two inches from the wall. The far end of the palace reaches to a distance of six feet. My objects here are arranged according to a chronological scale, of which every foot represents a thousand years."

"I see that," said Lord Restormel. "But, my dear fellow, this is a long building. Why the devil have you huddled things up in a corner?"

"You shall see in a moment," said Glanville, as he opened a door in the partition and admitted them to a new compartment, the farther boundary of which was not glass, but a gauze curtain. This compartment was nearly three times the size of the first, and also contained a shelf dotted with various objects. "Our first two shelves," said Glanville, "which together were six feet long, took us back, Mrs. Vernon, to the biblical date of Adam. This shelf, whose length is something like twenty feet, gives us the landmarks of the pre-Adamite civilisations. Here is a specimen of pre-Adamite writing—a facsimile of the wonderful ebony tablet of Mena. Here we come to models of great pre-Adamite merchant ships made from Egyptian drawings. Earlier still than the ships are those beautiful jars and pitchers, those delicate little charms, those dainty ornamental figures. And here—look at them—these combs, with ivory birds for handles. Fastidious women were drawing these through their hair at their dressing-tables six thousand years before Eve awoke in Eden. My collection is very incomplete. These things are flint implements. Don't waste your time on those, but look for a moment at these fragments of mortised woodwork. They are just like the carpentry of to-day. Well, the joiners who did that work had, when Adam was created, been dead sixteen thousand years. There

is a model—that neat little house on a platform—of one of the lake-dwellings. Here are the lake-dwellers' cooking-pots. Here are reproductions of their coarse diapered napkins. We have gone far back, but civilisation has begun already. And now wait for a moment till I get at one of these strings."

Whilst his friends paused, Glanville found what he was looking for. He pulled a dangling string, the curtains were drawn aside, and the whole of the orangery was visible to its farthest end.

"Magnificent!" said Lord Restormel, as he contemplated the surprising vista.

"Here, Alistair," said Glanville, "is the building about which you felt so curious when we had our dip in the sea. Its length, as I said then, is exactly a thousand feet. We are now twenty-six feet from the end by which we entered. The shelf, as you see, continues the whole way. And now, as we go on, let us take a glance at what stands on it. From the curtain which I have just drawn back to the beginning of those heaps of lime, the distance is nearly sixty feet. This stands for another sixty thousand years, and all along the shelf are models of early men, like figures out of a Noah's ark, and these are the caves they lived in. Here," he went on, when they came at last to the spot where a long bank of lime took the place of all other objects, "we're looking at man as he was more than eighty thousand years ago. And now for this bank of lime, heaped into miniature mountains—it extends to a length of a hundred and sixty feet. This represents the latest glacial epoch. The ice and the snow—the Huns and Vandals of nature—had for all this period driven man out of Europe. Let us hurry on to the end of it. Here the

ice ends. The figures of men appear again, and they dot the shelf for a length of four hundred and eighty feet. These are the men that lived and died in Europe for a period of very nearly half a million years: and then comes another lime bank. This extends for two hundred and sixty feet. It is glacial epoch number one, during which, for more than a quarter of a million years, Europe was white with snow, and the human race expelled from it. Perhaps you think there is nothing more to come, but the lime bank, as you'll see, doesn't quite reach to the door, and a bit of shelf remains which has one thing on it which will interest you. Look," said Glanville, when his party had followed him to the farther door, "before the first mantle of dreadful cold had descended, this was left by those of our own blood as a relic for us. It's a drawing on ivory by one of our pre-glacial ancestors. It's a drawing of a woman—the earliest of female portraits. Look at her—this pathetic object—our mother—this nameless savage. She has one thing on—one only, and that thing is a bracelet. Can you, Mrs. Vernon, who are familiar with London ballrooms, doubt the lady's relationship to many of your own contemporaries?"

"One can hardly bear to look at it," said Mrs. Vernon, who by this time had the portrait in her hand; "and yet I can hardly put it down. It makes all the history that we know—the rise and fall of empires—seem like the squabbles of children during one day in the schoolroom."

"And don't you find," said Glanville, who was now opening the door, "that it suggests a similar, though not quite the same thought, with regard to the history of human religions also?"

The door was by this time opened. Some moments

elapsed, however, before Mrs. Vernon and her companion could bring themselves to quit the building, and turn their eyes away from what seemed to be its interminable perspective.

"Upon my word," said Mr. Hancock, as soon as they were in the open air again, "that's a most ingenious and a most impressive object-lesson, Mr. Glanville. The dates and the duration of the supposed glacial epochs—there's still some dispute, I fancy, among men of science as to these."

"No doubt," said Glanville. "The work of the ice and snow may have taken place not quite in the manner represented. The portrait of the woman with the bracelet may possibly be inter-glacial. You must take my exhibition as no more than a rough sketch of things. Indeed it is probably far more out of drawing than you suggest; for it cramps the history of man into the smallest possible compass which the most timid anthropologists of any school can assign to it. It gives man an antiquity of a million years only. This is probably twenty, and possibly a hundred times too little. If we give to Christianity a shelf-length of twenty-two inches, humanity ought probably to have a shelf-length of five, and possibly of twenty miles. But for the purpose of our present discussion a thousand feet is enough, and no alteration of its details could alter its general import."

The party, while Glanville was speaking, had been slowly following their host up a path which presently brought them to a circle of secluded lawn, where a tea-table under the trees was surrounded by a group of chairs. A chair in a prominent place was again assigned to Mr. Hancock, whilst at Glanville's request Lady Snowdon stationed herself by the tea-

pot. The hot water, however, had not yet been brought; and it was agreed that, in any case, the dispensing of mere physical refreshment should be postponed till the Conference had reached its now approaching conclusion.

"I hope," resumed Glanville, "that our chairman and all the rest of you see that in taking you to my two exhibitions I have all along had in view the point which we have pledged ourselves to consider."

"I think," said Mr. Hancock, "that the moral of them must be pretty plain to all of us. Still, it will be more satisfactory if you will put it for us in your own words."

"Well," said Glanville, "you remember how, before we left the other end of the garden, I said that the Roman Church was armed with a theory of her own authority which might, if we isolated the Christian conception of history, so buttress up the collapsing biblical evidences, as to give us this conception back again in a form which would be logically defensible. Indeed, I have often myself felt, under the spell of this Catholic theory, the old Universe of miracle forming itself once more round me; and as it gradually shut me up in a kind of enchanted globe, the Fall, the Incarnation, the Ascension, and all their kindred marvels, became once more believable and not unsupported facts. But the moment this globe collides with realities outside itself, it bursts like a bubble; and a vision of existence is revealed to us so enormous and overwhelming that the contents of the globe, whatever their internal cohesion, seem more incredible on account of their pettiness as a whole than their separate parts do if we take them one by one. It becomes as hard to believe that the epic of miraculous Christianity can,

in any sense whatever, be what the Churches take it for, as it would be to believe that the annals of a year-old villa at Clapham explained the condition of the entire population of London, and the origin and the rise of the art of building also. I appeal to Mrs. Vernon herself. I saw her, as we left the orangery, turn to take one last look down its vista of a thousand feet. The Christian religion occupies but two-and-twenty inches of it; the religion of Abraham's children but twenty-two inches more. How can we possibly accept a story of the human race, the miraculous truth of which is the fundamental assumption of both of them, when we see that out of at least a hundred millennial chapters this story begins with a legend which refers to the middle of the last, and then only touches on facts by turning them upside-down?"

"After all," said Mr. Hancock, "I think Mr. Glanville is right. This is the greater reason which includes the less. It's a question of imagination, and what we call practical judgment."

"The practical judgment of the modern world," said Lord Restormel, "that scientific knowledge is fatal to Christian mythology, though we call it modern, is very far from being new. It began to be formed by Europe three hundred years ago; and perhaps Mrs. Vernon will let me tell her something about this that will surprise her."

"Tell me by all means," said Mrs. Vernon. "I am here waiting to be surprised."

"The keenest judgment ever passed on the significance of modern knowledge," said Lord Restormel, "was passed instinctively, when that knowledge was only in its infancy, not by sceptics or heretics, but by the orthodox Churches themselves—Catholic and

Protestant alike; and they gave expression to it not through their words only, but through their fears, their curses, their dungeons, and their murdering fires. 'If the earth be merely an insignificant star in a family of countless worlds, it at once becomes incredible that God should have died for man; and therefore let us roast every teacher of the new astronomy.' This is what was said, in almost these very words, by Cardinal, Calvinist, Lutheran, from one end of Europe to another, when Galileo was in chains and Bruno was being fried like bacon. Their methods to-day are less brutal, but not more efficacious. Eh, Rupert? What's that paper you're looking at?"

"It's something," said Glanville, "which I copied out this morning from the review of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, written by the great Bishop Wilberforce, soon after the book appeared. The doctrine of human evolution, which he calls the 'frenzied inspiration of the inhaler of a mephitic gas, is,' he says, 'equally and utterly irreconcilable with the entire Christian representation of man's moral and spiritual condition—with man's derived supremacy over the earth—man's fall and redemption—the Incarnation of the Eternal Son—the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit.' Bishop Wilberforce, you see, does but re-utter to-day the judgment of the orthodox Churches in the days of Galileo and of Bruno; and the world to-day, Mrs. Vernon, is simply taking the Churches at their word, and adopting their own conclusion."

"How true!" exclaimed Mr. Brompton, sitting up in his chair. "How magnificently true! Ah, yes! The Churches which made a burning torch of Bruno have been to knowledge what Nero was to the

Churches. And yet," he went on, "how hard superstition dies !

" ' Destroy its fib of sophistry, in vain
The creature's at its dirty work again.' "

These reptile priests, since they can no longer kill science, are now pretending to fawn on it, and are licking and slobbering over its hands."

"I think, Mr. Brompton," said Lady Snowdon, "you're a little too violent sometimes."

"Ah," said Mr. Brompton, drawing a long breath, "you haven't suffered under it—you haven't suffered under clericalism—as I have done. Mr. Glanville, might I look at your extract from Bishop Wilberforce?"

"Certainly," said Glanville; "and I'll quote something else meanwhile which, oddly enough, illustrates what Mr. Brompton has just said. I have quoted Bishop Wilberforce. Let me now give you something from Archdeacon Wilberforce, his descendant. The Archdeacon, you may remember, was quoted by the Bishop of Glastonbury as one of the champions of miraculous Christianity to-day. I have here a volume of the Archdeacon's sermons, which, in the Bishop's phrase, have echoed through the arches of our grand national Abbey. I looked through this volume the morning after the Bishop alluded to it; and I found, amongst other things, that whereas Bishop Wilberforce forty years ago had denounced evolution as a dream inspired by a mephitic gas, the Archdeacon is patronising Christ under the name of 'the Great Evolver.' But the most interesting bit I came across was his defence of the doctrine of the Ascension. Well, Mrs. Vernon, I'll ask you to listen to this. He begins by saying that

the idea of a heaven situated above the earth is an absurdity now for all of us. 'What is up in Galilee,' he says, 'would be down at the Antipodes,' and 'the literal physical departure of a body through trackless space' would be a perfectly meaningless, even if it were not an incredible, incident. What, then, according to him, was the miracle of the Ascension in reality? It was an optical delusion, he says, to which Christ in His omnipotence resorted, in order to advertise His disciples that, His temporal work being over, He was disappearing into the fourth dimension of space. I found another sermon also on the same subject, by an eminent High Churchman, who speaks of commemorating the sacred day 'on which our Lord disappeared—or, as we say, ascended.' Both preachers are compelled to adopt the very same subterfuge. Doesn't this show you what a burden even priests themselves now find the miracles which were once their proudest boast? How can the secular world believe any longer in the Ascension, when its defenders are driven to explain it as the trick of an Indian juggler? If the Ascension was an optical delusion, was the Resurrection more? Where is the Church to stop, when once her chosen defenders have begun to transform her miracles in this truly astounding way? And now, Mrs. Vernon, I've one little thing more to add. You were quoting Dr. Sanday, our most prominent Anglican apologist. He, with all his predisposition to believe in miracles, can hardly manage to do quite as well as the Archdeacon. Here is a sketch of his argument, in a paper by him on *The Obligation of the Creeds*. We may still, he says, recite the creeds, however we may doubt their articles, because their proper form is not 'I believe,' but 'we believe,' or, in other words, 'the

Church believes.' It seems to me that, according to this theory, a Christian might with equal propriety recite the creed of Mahomet, and with greater profit; for he would thus be informing himself of what was really believed by strangers instead of muttering what was questioned or disbelieved by himself. I should wish also specially to commend to your notice Dr. Sanday's application of his principles to the miraculous birth of Christ. Whether or no, he says, this was really true as a fact, God at all events in times past willed that we should believe it to be true. Can anything be more pitiable than these attempts of an educated man to gulp down decomposing morsels of dogma when his intellectual gorge is all the while rising against them?"

"And what," said Lady Snowdon, "is your opinion of Canon Morgan?—I don't mean as a destructive critic, I mean as a reconstructive Christian. He, at all events, doesn't gulp dogmas down. He does the other thing, and, like Dr. Johnson, he says, 'A fool would have swallowed them.' I've a Broad Church brother—a dean—who's the Canon's exact duplicate; so perhaps," Lady Snowdon continued, "it is only familiarity which, in my case, breeds contempt."

"I thought myself," said Mrs. Vernon, who was animated by the double desire to express her own feelings and put her aunt in her place, "that Canon Morgan, much as I disliked his tone, said one thing, at all events, which covers a great deal. It wasn't original with him, so perhaps that accounts for its wisdom. I mean his saying—we now hear it said so constantly—that faith in the Founder of Christianity is trust in a person, not an assent to propositions."

"To me," said Glanville, "it seems hard to imagine a sentence more full than this of cowardly and illogical self-deception. Without an assent to propositions, how can you have trust in anyone? If a banker trusts a clerk, what does this trust mean? Does not it mean an assent to the proposition that the clerk is honest? In the same way, trust in the person of Christ means an assent to the proposition that Christ is trustworthy. But trustworthy in what way? Merely as a good example? If that is all, then faith in His person merely means that we assert Him to have been a good man. Nobody doubts that, but we are no nearer to miraculous faith than before. If we trust Him as more than a good example, if we trust His statements with regard to God and heaven as possessing a final authority which we look for in vain elsewhere, then our trust means an assent to a most distinct proposition, that His knowledge and His nature were in some way more than human; and a man like Canon Morgan is forced to reconstruct in his bedroom the whole edifice of dogmas which he pulls down in his pulpit. My dear Mrs. Vernon, we can't shuffle out of these matters. If our belief in a miraculous Christ can't live as an open dogma, we shall hardly prolong its life by converting it into an innuendo."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Brompton, looking up from the notes which Glanville had given him of the Bishop's attack on Darwin. "But, Mr. Glanville, you've suppressed the best bit of all. Here is Bishop Wilberforce ridiculing or denouncing Darwin for representing famine, disease, and indeed death generally, as the means by which Nature has selected the creatures fittest to live. 'For the pre-

sence of these strange forms of death and suffering amongst the works of God we,' says the sapient Bishop, 'can give him a still simpler solution. We,' says the Bishop, 'can tell him of the strong shudder which ran through all the world when Adam, the first man—its head and ruler—fell.' There it is! The cæcus appendix, microbes, malaria, bad seasons, failures of crops, earthquakes which swallow up cities, cyclonic waves which sweep Pacific islanders into the sea, the constant preying of one species on another—all this is due to our old friend Adam and the apple. Ah! these priests—these priests! They are bound to hark back to the old *reductio ad absurdum*: and along with the strong shudder that Adam sent through the Universe come all the other strong shudders that make up Hebrew history—Joshua's moon, the dial of Ahaz, Mr. Maxwell's 'merciful fiat' which killed two hundred thousand Assyrians—in short, the whole blessed bag of tricks."

Lady Snowdon drew herself up at these last remarkable words, as a protest against their irreverence, not so much perhaps to the Bible as to herself. "Mr. Brompton," she said, "such language is hardly necessary. Nobody here—not even my niece, Mrs. Vernon, though she has, as I can see, been distressed by many things that have been said—believes in the Christian mythology any more than you yourself do. If you stamp on it in that way, you'll only convey the impression that it is, in your own mind, not quite so dead as you think it is."

This observation, for the moment, shut Mr. Brompton up; and as Glanville was now speaking in a low tone to Mrs. Vernon, the general proceedings came to an abrupt standstill.

"If archdeacons," Glanville was saying to her, "can only defend our belief in the Ascension thus, do you really retain that—your belief in the crowning miracle? Or which, and how many, do you still retain of the others? But I won't ask you. After all, that is not our question. I have only tried to show you what makes such a large—such an increasing number of people unable to accept any of them."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Vernon, "I believe no more than you do. But it takes one's breath away to have it put before one sharply; and one's heart, like a frog's, still goes on beating after it is dead. There must, after all, be some truth in this—in what we have all lived by for so long."

"No doubt," said Glanville; "and what that is we will try to inform ourselves by-and-by."

"Well," said Mr. Hancock, as he looked complacently round him, "since it seems we have pretty well answered the question which we set out to discuss, namely, the question of why the world, which apparently includes us all, is no longer able to believe in the traditional religion of miracles, I may, I suppose, declare that our first conference is ended."

"There she is!" exclaimed Mrs. Vernon, recovering her vivacity with an effort. "My dear, I'm so glad to see you." A servant, as she spoke, was approaching with a hissing urn; and following him was another, who escorted a strange lady. Her demeanour was composed. Her eyes had a half-sullen softness in them; and her perfect figure was draped in a long cloak, the colour of coral, which Glanville at once recognised.

"Mr. Glanville," said Mrs. Vernon, "here is my niece Stephanie."

Lord Restormel turned round in his chair, with a look of indolent inquiry ; and his eyes—judges of women—made him for the time forget not only the dogmas of religion, but even the sterner aspects of morality.

CHAPTER III

"THIS evening," said Glanville to Mrs. Vernon, in the twilight of the drawing-room before dinner, "they want to be at it again."

"At this same discussion?" said Mrs. Vernon. "Haven't we had enough for one day? I feel somehow as if I'd been at a friend's funeral. Who wants it?"

"Apparently," said Glanville, "your niece does. Restormel has been walking her about, and giving her an account of our conference. She seems to have jumped at the idea of it. Her interest in the matter does not in the least surprise me."

"Not surprise you!" exclaimed Mrs. Vernon. "Why, you've hardly exchanged a word with her."

"No more words," said Glanville, "than could be got into three minutes. And yet I learned, during those three minutes at the railway station, more of her mind with regard to certain subjects than, I dare say, she'd confide to the majority of her oldest friends."

Lord Restormel, next whom Miss Leighton had been given a seat at tea-time, had instantly classed her as a woman to whom men always attend, though she does not, and need not, make any effort to gain their attention; and retaining, as he did, certain vice-regal ideas of his right to the first enjoyment of any new feminine sympathies, he had managed,

when tea was over, to secure the young lady to himself, and exchange a variety of confidences with her in the course of a private walk.

Miss Leighton's age, though she was young, was not quite easy to guess; but, whatever it might be, she had a subtle air of experience which would have made the thought of a chaperon in connection with her seem an absurdity. Glanville had received this impression the first moment he met her, and it was heightened now by the ease with which she entered the drawing-room, and the composed and the fastidious leisureliness with which she drew on her gloves. At dinner she was next her host.

"Have you," he asked her, "been reading any more of Pascal?"

"No," she answered in an undertone, raising her eyes to his. "I hope that this evening we're going to do something better. How much more interesting these discussions are than gossip about other people's love affairs! What, Lady Snowdon—my rest-cure? It really was not unamusing. I saw Sir Roderick Harborough walking arm in arm with a bishop, and I had a book to read, the very name of which I am ashamed to tell you."

Lord Restormel stared at her with an odd gleam in his eyes, as though she had risen in his interest rather than his estimation. Lady Snowdon, though not given to starting, started.

"It was called," said Miss Leighton placidly, "*An Outline of Spinoza's Philosophy*."

"My dear," exclaimed Lady Snowdon in a tone of surprised relief, "you positively took my breath away!"

"Please," said Miss Leighton to Glanville, "begin talking about something else, or else I'm certain

that that bright-eyed little man there—isn't it Mr. Hancock?—will want to examine me in what I don't understand."

Miss Leighton, though during the course of dinner she said nothing more that was remarkable, was felt by the gentlemen of the party to be so enlivening an addition to it, that they left the dining-room earlier than they otherwise might have done. All were willing—they were even becoming eager—to gratify her wishes by resuming the discussions of the afternoon. Miss Leighton was, however, at the moment when they reached the portico, in the act of entering the house, in order to provide herself with a cloak. Her host accompanied her, and whilst waiting with her for her maid in the hall he explained to her the course which their discussion would probably take that evening.

"I think I understand," she said, as she let him clasp round her throat a collar of soft swan's-down. "It's sure to comfort my aunt—and me too, perhaps. Who knows? I am all expectation."

When they re-entered the drawing-room on their way back to the portico, they found Mrs. Vernon seated by herself in the window, and heard outside a certain murmur of voices, as though some sort of discussion had set itself going already. They paused by Mrs. Vernon and listened. Mr. Brompton was standing on one of the steps with Lord Restormel, and, pleased to have captured such an auditor, was speaking to him with dramatic gesticulations.

"Believing!" he was saying. "Yes—that's their word—believing. What I tell my own ethical congregation is this: 'If you want, and if I want,' I say to them, 'to do an heroic or self-sacrificing action, what does it matter whether we believe or

don't believe that the Deity interfered with the course of the solar system in order to convince a nervous old gentleman, like Hezekiah, that a poultice of figs was a good prescription for a boil?'"

"And I suppose, my dear fellow," said Lord Restormel, "you and I may agree, as the Egyptians had agreed long before they had even heard of the Israelites, and the Incas had agreed long before they had even heard of the Christians, that if men are to live in society, they must abstain from robbing and stabbing each other; and yet we needn't believe that these sociological platitudes had to be written on two stones by the Deity, at the top of a temporary volcano. I have often thought," he continued, "that if the more startling of the biblical miracles—the crossing of the Red Sea through a kind of magical trench, the giving of the law, the solar disturbances caused for the benefit of Hezekiah and Joshua, the devils and the pigs, and so on, had been by some accident left out of the Bible, they are just the incidents which a man like Voltaire would have invented, as scurrilous caricatures which would make the others ridiculous. Will you let me offer you a cigar?"

Mr. Brompton accepted one, with a bow. He sometimes smoked in public, not because he liked the practice, but because it seemed to him a sort of mundane fumigation by which he got rid of the last remains of his orders.

"Can't they let it alone?" said Mrs. Vernon to Glanville. "Lord Restormel might at least have more tact and feeling. Do you know, when I listen to all that, what it makes me want to do? Literally, to go into my bedroom and begin saying my

prayers. I'll let you finish your discussion to-night by yourselves."

"My dear friend," said Glanville kindly, "stay with us; and I can promise you one thing. We'll send you to bed feeling happier than you do now. I want to speak for a moment to Mr. Hancock; and meanwhile do you and Miss Leighton sit yourselves down outside."

"Come, Aunt Juliet," said Miss Leighton. "It can do you no harm to listen."

Mrs. Vernon was persuaded. Glanville, having caught Mr. Hancock, drew him back into the drawing-room, where the two talked for a minute or two, and the latter made notes by a reading-lamp. They came back to the portico, bringing the lamp with them. This was placed on a table; and Mr. Hancock disposing his notes in the yellow artificial glow, which made a curious contrast with the whiteness of the brilliant moonlight, assumed once more his position and his duties as chairman.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "we are not, if you please, going to call this a second conference. We will call it the conclusion of our first. This afternoon we considered a certain series of statements, which the civilised world for ages has been accustomed to accept as historical; and we agreed that we cannot—or why a great many people cannot—accept them as historical any longer. Well, we have to recollect that we deliberately excluded from our consideration all the moral aspects of the religion with which these statements have been associated. These belong to a different inquiry altogether, which we hope will take place to-morrow; so they cannot have been treated to-day with the smallest disrespect by anybody. Mr. Glanville, however, fears that in

dealing merely with the miracles some of us may seem to have exhibited a lack of sufficient sympathy; and may thus, in the minds of some, have created a false impression. He wishes to remove this impression and complete our discussion now."

"I wish," said Glanville, "not so much to remove the impression as to invert it. We all of us here, I think, have some appreciation of poetry; and we all must have read, either in the original or in translations, Homer's *Odyssey* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*."

These words were greeted with a general murmur of assent.

"And some of us," he continued, "know from bitter experience that if the *Odyssey* is treated as a lesson-book for illustrating Greek constructions, and if Dante has to be studied for some horrible examination in literature, both these poems are detestable to us."

"I know that," said Mrs. Vernon, "with regard to Dante, well. Oh, those dreadful Dante classes! They made me hate the very thought of Italian."

"Well," said Glanville, "if the miscreant who taught you Dante had, instead of maddening you with a mass of obscure dates and events and the meaning of Dante's obscure allusions to them, done what was still worse, and insisted that Dante mainly deserved your attention as the one scientific authority on the physical structure of the Universe—had he tried to make you believe that hell was inside the earth, and that if, with a long enough drill, we bored in the proper place, we should make a hole in the head or the wings of Satan, you would not only have failed to appreciate the charm of Dante's poetry, but you would have looked on him and your teacher as a

couple of ignorant madmen. And then, again, if you were seriously told to believe that the *Odyssey* was mainly valuable for the light which it throws on geography—to believe, on Homer's authority, that the earth is flat like a pancake, with the island of Calypso for its centre and the ocean stream for its circumference, and the Elysian plains in the locality which you have hitherto assigned to New York, you would call the *Odyssey* nonsense, and would very likely pitch it into the fire."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, smiling. "I very probably should."

"Precisely," said Glanville, "and so should I, and all of us. But since matters are as they are, since we do not dream of considering the descriptions of Homer or of Dante as descriptions of literal facts, or indeed as having any relation to them; since our minds are not asked to believe in any actual devil with bat's wings, or in any circle of actual ice, or in any actual island in the middle of the earth's superficies, or in any actual winds that can be shut up in coal-sacks—these descriptions are at once accepted by the imagination. The imagination lifts itself on the wings it steals from the intellect, and impossible falsehoods become for us the truest and most sublime poetry."

While Glanville was speaking, his friend Lord Restormel had been looking at him. The unpleasant flash, which had shone for a moment in his eyes when Miss Leighton mentioned her unnamable book, was gone. He had become a different man.

"Yes," he said. "Think of that exquisite passage in the 'Purgatorio,' where the boat comes laden with souls, having a something of whiteness for the sails

of it—the sails which are the angels' wings. On the imagination Dante's description falls like dew on a flower. To force it on the intellect is like spitting on hot iron."

"Well," said Glanville, "and now let me point my moral. What is true of the poetry of poets like Dante and Homer is true of the poetry of the Bible. We won't speak this evening of its moral or spiritual symbolism. We will merely prepare ourselves for considering this to-morrow by seeing how those very parts of it, which, when touched by historical criticism, are the first to decompose into childish and monstrous absurdities, spring to life again—how corruption puts on incorruption—the moment their claims to historical truth are abandoned."

"I can't think," said Lady Snowdon, "that even if we take it as a fairy tale we can make very much of Elisha and the little *gamins* who laughed at him, and the bears that gobbled them up, in response to the holy man's horrible and absurd curses."

"No," said Lord Restormel, "nor of Jonah's whale either. In cases like these Homer certainly nods. But the chariot of Elijah—the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; the mountains surrounded with the chariots and the horsemen of fire; the prophet's retirement to the desert, to Horeb, the mount of God—what a magic in those mere words!—and the feeding of the prophet by the ravens—merely to read of these things, if we will but take them as poetry, is to feel one's spirit caught up in the chariot of the prophet along with him."

Mr. Brompton, although as the priest of a new religion he was accustomed to contrast the Bible, very much to its disadvantage, with Emerson's

Essays, was so much moved by Lord Restormel's appreciation of it, that his own emulative spirit rose to the occasion likewise. "Ah," he said, "and I too—after my breach with my late Church, when I was maturing, and yet shrinking from my scheme of forming a new one—I too had my vigil under the Bo tree; I too had my Horeb moments, when I shut myself up alone in a humble hermitage on the Clyde."

"Near which," Mr. Hancock whispered to Lady Snowdon, "he had a well-to-do Free Kirk uncle, who left him thirty thousand shares in the Clyde Banking Company as a reward for having abandoned Babylon."

"When I was brooding and hesitating there," Mr. Brompton continued, "I was often moved to my very soul by the thought of those living words, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'"

Mr. Brompton supplemented this confession by the modest adoption of a rapt and prophetic attitude; and Mr. Hancock, not to be behindhand in the matter of taste and feeling, began to cite some examples of biblical poetry on his own account. He was, however, slightly annoyed by the fact that Glanville meanwhile began whispering to Lord Restormel; and he was soon annoyed still more to see him, when the whispers were over, go into the house, apparently with the purpose of fetching something. Such, indeed, proved to be the case, for he very shortly came back again with some sheets of paper in his hand; and this at once excited so much general curiosity that Mr. Hancock's happiest quotation came to a premature end. "I want," Glanville said, "to have a few words with our chairman." Mr. Hancock at once was soothed. Glanville sat

down beside him; and the papers being placed in the lamplight, some murmured observations followed, which Mr. Hancock concluded with a nod of complete intelligence.

"In order," he said, "to illustrate the point we have just been dwelling on, a document has been placed in my hands, parts of which the author will read out to us. The author is Lord Restormel; and if he will kindly come to the lamp, I shall be proud to give up my seat to him."

Lord Restormel, with an air of indolent acquiescence, which could not quite conceal the fact that he was at once pleased and reluctant, rose, and taking the seat indicated, looked on his own composition with that smile of assumed indifference under which authors, on such occasions, hide their affection for their offspring.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that this trifle, which I had quite forgotten, but with a copy of which Mr. Glanville has confronted me, will require a little explanation. It was begun as a joke. The occasion which gave rise to it was this. My old friends the Wyverns, who were, as we all know, fond of curious people, passed most of their latter years at a watering-place on my Cornish property; and there it so happened that a villa, not far from their own, was one fine day taken by a singular tenant, who was partly English and partly, I believe, Persian. His name was Zara Grainger, and this, in the Visitors' List, had Prince, not Esquire, at the end of it. Needless to say, the Wyverns sought his acquaintance. The Persian Prince looked the part to perfection. He had dark, restless eyes, and a beard like an Assyrian king's. The end of the matter was that this mysterious being fell in love with Miriam

Lumsden, the Wyverns' only daughter. For a time he confined himself to sighing and making eyes at her; but as these demonstrations met with no response, he ended by calling on her father, telling him that she had been his wife in some former state of existence, that they had a numerous family, and that he was determined to be reunited to her. The whole story seemed so much like a parody of one of the stories in *Lalla Rookh*, that I tried for Miss Lumsden's amusement to make a version of it in Moore's style. I did well enough with a canto. I endowed Miriam with

" 'A gaze that seems
To see her native heaven in dreams.'

I made Zara claim an ancestry of princely fire-worshippers with ever-burning mountain altars. Miriam was a devout Mahometan, and I brought in Allah and Eblis and

" 'The bridge like a knife-edge, that spans the abyss,'

and so on. I think I may say without vanity that most of my lines were as good as Moore's own; but what struck me was the poverty of the sources from which Moore drew his inspiration. My story, however, as it went on, led me insensibly away into legends of another kind. I was at once conscious of a difference. These other legends, although I was merely playing with them, had a poetic something, which in spite of myself made me wonder. My later verses showed this; and for this reason Mr. Glanville has asked me to read them to you. Zara, according to me—though I no doubt wronged him there—is a lunatic escaped from Bedlam; and he darkly speaks of it as his palace, which he has left

that he may seek Miriam. The only part which Mr. Glanville wants me to read to you describes the visit which Zara pays to Lord Wyvern. The canto begins thus—still more or less *à la* Moore :—

“ ‘Tis blest to hear that lute in heaven
Which is the heart of Isra'el ;
And Eblis' brow, with thunder riven,
Still keeps some gleams of heaven in hell ;
For next to those, whose bliss is won,
Who bow before the Eternal Name,
Are those who bow the head to none,
And go contented in the flame :
But truly cursed, and cursed alone,
Unscathed by fire, unhealed by peace,
Those tribes whom heaven and hell disown ;
And Zara is the prince of these.’

“ Well, my hero, as soon as he is introduced into Lord Wyvern's smoking-room, states his business and gives him an account of his family.

“ ‘ I am a prince,” he said, “ whose line
Is longer and more proud than thine.
Still on the altar of my sires
Burn to the Sun their Ghebir fires.
Those fires had long begun to blaze
Ere the first smoke-wreath, grey and dim,
By Jordan's banks, through violet haze,
Rose from the tents of Ibrahim.
Ere Yussuf left his garment where
He should have laid his heart instead,
Ere Tyrian seas had bled to share
Their purples with Abolah's bed,
My fathers reigned ; and prince and priest,
Heir of my sacred fathers, I.”

He then goes on to describe his lordly dwelling, with its walls, gates, and warders—a building whose very name, were it merely written in English, would terrify the English reader. He will, however, he says, for Lord Wyvern's satisfaction, write it in his own tongue,

“ ‘ whose scripture runs
A course that's counter to the sun's' ;

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and inscribes on a sheet of notepaper the word
'Lambled,' which is merely 'Bedlam' inverted.

" He pushed the scroll to Miriam's sire.
The Giaour has cast it in the fire.
With haughty heel he ground the floor.
'Begone !' he cried. 'Behold the door !
And if to Miriam's eyes again,
In crowded road or leafy lane,
You should so much as lift an eye,
Or greet her with a smile or sigh,
We have our faithful warders, too,
With helmèd brows and garb of blue,
And truncheons, who shall make you flee
To Lambled or to hell for me.'

" Still as a statue Zara stood ;
But in his cheeks the hot, dark blood
Began to burn. His clustering curls
Grew damp. His eyes were liquid fires,
Bright as the altars of his sires
Mirrored in Persia's gulf of pearls.

" 'Hearken,' he cried, 'you bid me go !
But ere I leave you, Christian, know——'
He paused. A curtain stirred ; and there
Was Miriam's self, who faced the pair.

" 'Aha !' cried Zara, 'Christian, see !
Let Miriam judge 'twixt me and thee.
You bid me go, nor dare to raise
One humble glance to drink her gaze,
Nor e'en to tread the dust which feels
The pressure of her pointed heels.
Proud fool ! you little know she's mine—
Already mine—my queen, my bride,
Nor by the marge of what strange brine
The indissoluble knot was tied.'

" 'My sire, he raves.' And Miriam's cheek,
Which sought her sire's, was white with fear.
'Speak,' said her sire. 'Impostor, speak !
Tell me the day, the church, the year.'
'The year !' cried Zara. 'Christian, know
It was three thousand years ago.'
Then to the maid he turned again,
And spake to her in gentler strain.

" 'Oh, fairest and first of the fugitive's daughters,
 Has it gone from your soul how we stood by the wave,
 And our sandals were wet with the wash of the waters,
 When we started and knew that we gazed on a grave;
 And the sea-gulls were flying, the foam-crest was leaping,
 And the billows were loud where the foeman was sleeping,
 And you broke into song? I remember it yet.
 Can Zara remember and Miriam forget?'

" 'Your words,' said Miriam's sire, 'are wild.
 Go, for you agitate my child."
 But Zara stirred not. One long breath
 He drew into his heaving breast,
 And, fierce as life and stern as death,
 Broke out again like one possessed:
 'I heard her timbrels on the air;
 I heard her words beyond the wind.
 Those hands with which your own are twined
 Were wild with Israel's music there.
 And, Christian, thou hast read, I ween,
 Of what her eyes and mine have seen.

" 'We saw the chariots plunge their way
 Between the walls of chrysoprase.
 Through fringes of the frozen spray
 We saw the trampling bowmen pass.

" 'The tufted standards caught the air,
 Like shipless masts that cut the seas.
 We heard the far-off trumpets blare.
 We heard the shouting companies.

" 'We saw the priests their cymbals toss,
 We heard the hymns to Râ and Tum,
 And 'neath their helmets' golden gloss
 We saw the brows of Pharaoh come.

" 'We marked his burnished buckler flash,
 The harnessed flanks, the streaming manes,
 The circlings of the far-flung lash,
 The quivering of the crimson reins.

" 'We heard his tyres upon the stones,
 Which had not seen the heavens till then,
 And, mingled now with bronze and bones,
 Shall see nor moons nor suns again.

" 'We closed our eyes like children lost,
 When to our feet a great wave clomb.
 We looked again, and all that host
 Was one thin line of wavering foam

“ ‘ Then from your lips broke forth the chaunt
Which still in Zara’s heart is loud ;
And there our bridal covenant
Was pledged between the fire and cloud.’ ”

Here Lord Restormel paused, and being rewarded by a request to continue, “On this,” he said, “Zara appeals with his eyes to Miriam, and gets in return nothing but a blank stare. He is pained, but not daunted. He draws himself up, and tells her with a lofty tenderness that her cold behaviour does but bind her to him by another indelible recollection. Miriam and her father are too much astonished to interrupt him, and he proceeds :—

“ ‘ Oh, thus divided heart from heart,
Before the awful mountain’s side,
Once in a tent we kneeled apart,
And for three days were sanctified—

“ ‘ Three days, until the trumpet’s throat
Shouted, and lo, before our eyes,
Like wings a darkness came and smote
The spires that crowded in the skies.

“ ‘ The smoke, like packs of noiseless wool,
Came smouldering down on gorge and glen ;
The darkness deepened. In the lull
We heard our two hearts beat, and then—

“ ‘ Out of the midnight leapt the flame,
Out of the muteness, like a flood,
The shatterings of the thunder came,
And all the world was dumb with God.’ ”

“You see,” said Glanville to Mrs. Vernon, “though he was laughing just now at the story of the Red Sea and the temporary volcano of Sinai, he can still detect something in them which is not merely ridiculous.”

“Next,” resumed Lord Restormel, “Zara goes on to remind her of how the prophet toiled up the

mountain in grey robes, 'to meet the thunder and the throne'; how the people, in his absence, made the golden calf, and, still half-blind and deaf with the thunder and lightning of Jehovah, sang and danced to an idol less able to hear and to see them than they themselves were to see and to hear each other; how the prophet at last came down like a descending star, and how, on the slope,—

“ ‘There, when the vapours tore their shrouds,
His star-like face was manifest;
His grey robes now were glistening clouds
That turn to lilac in the west:
And in his sacred hands we saw
The tables of the eternal law.’ ”

“Then comes the prophet's indignation. The tables of the law are broken, and Zara exclaims to Miriam:—

“ ‘We marked the fragments where they lay,
And now if Miriam's heart is dumb,
The heart of Zara breaks as they.’ ”

“Miriam,” continued Lord Restormel, “is speechless still, but Zara even now is not non-plussed. He stamps his foot, draws himself up to his full height, and in a tone loftier than ever he begins again:—

“ ‘I *will* be heard. My bride shall heed—
Shall heed me yet,’ said Zara. ‘I
Will make that frosted bosom bleed
With one last thorn of memory.’ ”

“ ‘Hearken, whilst Zara speaks of one
Whose bones and tissues knew the night,
And were not—till they saw the sun
Once more, and rose my Shulamite.’ ”

“ ‘Her breasts were grapes; her stature sprang
A palm's, and still those ears are shells
Which hold the hours when Zara sang
His Canticle of Canticles.’ ”

Tell me, can Miriam's memory miss
The echoings of a song like this?

“The turtle's voice is in the tree,
The figs are green, the rains are gone;
Arise, my fair one, come with me—
With me, my love, to Lebanon.

“Arise, my fair one, come with me,
Where Abana or Pharphar stirs;
And thine some milk-white lodge shall be
That shines among the cucumbers.

“My love hath risen and come. My love
Is mine; in mine her hand is myrrh;
Her bed is green. Her roof above
Is cedar, and the beams are fir.

“Her doors are closed. Let no man dare
To break her dreaming till she choose.
Oh, love, the night is in my hair,
My locks are laden with the dews.

“My undefiled, my love, my dove—
A something stirs—'tis come, 'tis gone;
I lift my hand; the hinges move;
The latch is sweet with cinnamon.

“My love, my dove, my undefiled,
My spouse, my sister, and my child—
A greeting for the sister's ear,
And for the little child a tear;
But oh, my bride, I halt afraid.
Stay me with flagons! Comfort me
With apples ere my lips are laid
Upon the tower of ivory.

“Oh, fear not, loveliest, fear not. Lo,
I bring you gifts of fire and snow.
Fear not, my own; from every hour
That comes like this, my bride to be,
A new virginity shall flower
My more than maid for me.

“Beneath the bed's embroideries
Thy limbs are like a wave. Thy feet
Are ivory. In thy brows and eyes
The ivory and the midnight meet.

“‘Thou hast dove’s eyes within thine hair;
Thy lips are scarlet, and from thence
A something stirs that’s like the air
Blown from the hills of frankincense,

“‘Which murmurs—what? Upon that word
Behold I seal thee with a seal——’”

Lord Restormel here broke off with a laugh. “I didn’t,” he said, “get any farther than that.”

“And I’m sure,” said Lady Snowdon, “it was a very good thing you didn’t.”

CHAPTER IV

"**H**AVE you ever," said Lord Restormel to Mrs. Vernon, the following day at luncheon—"I've no doubt you have, for you're sure to be a church-goer—noticed how your own voice, if you join in a hymn with others, seems to acquire itself something of the volume of sound which really belongs to the choir, the congregation, and the organ? I felt, as soon as I began to associate my own jingle with the incidents and imagery of the Bible, as if the tones of a great organ had associated themselves with a pipe of straw. Yes—our host is right. Cease to think the biblical books inspired, and there's no literature to compare with them. By the way, Rupert, I got this morning the last report of our own trade with Germany; and if you, my dear fellow, are to be president of the new commission, there's one question to which you must give your solemn attention. Is pig-iron a manufacture, or is it a raw material? Before post-time, I wish you'd have a look at the paper."

"Let us come at once then," said Glanville. "The post leaves in an hour."

"What," exclaimed Mrs. Vernon eagerly, "is Mr. Glanville going back into politics?"

"Who knows?" said Glanville. "Now, Restormel, are you ready? And, Hancock, meanwhile will you explain to our friends our moral and intellectual programme for this afternoon and this evening?"

Mr. Hancock looked as if he would have liked to follow the statesmen ; but as this was not suggested, he engaged to do what was asked of him.

"Perhaps," he began, "Miss Leighton has not been told that having done with miraculous religion we are going to pass on to natural religion, and to ask how much or how little is likely to be left us of the last by that modern system of knowledge which has proved such a solvent of the first."

"I wasn't," said Miss Leighton, "told that : but I was sagacious enough to assume it. It seems to me to be the point of the whole proceedings."

Mr. Hancock felt slightly snubbed. "Well, Miss Leighton," he went on incisively, "in order to discuss this same natural religion to any purpose, as we hope to do this evening, it will be necessary—for the term, as you know, Miss Leighton, is very loosely used—I dare say even you could hardly give me a definition of it——"

"I couldn't," said Miss Leighton, "give a definition of anything—not even of a pair of shoes—to any man who looked as alarming as you do."

Mr. Hancock was appeased. He relapsed into his usual *bonhomie*. "Mr. Glanville proposes," he went on—"ah, Miss Leighton, you're a very clever young lady—Mr. Glanville proposes that we should consider this afternoon what natural religion is—what's at the bottom of all our minds when we speak of it—before we begin asking, as we hope to do this evening, whether or no we have any intellectual right to it. Now here we come back to our literary digression of last night. Lord Restormel summed up just now, in one of those capital phrases of his, the immediate conclusion to which it led us. Cease to think the biblical books inspired, and there's no literature to

be compared with them. From this conclusion Mr. Glanville wants to draw us on to another. Cease to think the Christian religion supernatural, and there's no example of natural religion to compare with it. He proposes, therefore—I'm not quite certain how—to give us natural religion as the residuum at the bottom of the Christian melting-pot."

"I," said Seaton, "am entirely of Mr. Glanville's opinion."

"Ah," said Mr. Brompton solemnly, "if he had spoken of Christian ethics instead of the Christian religion—if he'd only spoken of the glad service of man. But he seems to me, as it is, to be quite on the wrong tack."

"I," said Mrs. Vernon, "should make an objection also. If we must give up our old beliefs we must: but I don't see how we can call a religion natural which, if not supernatural, is nothing. We might just as well go on believing in a telegram about a battle in China, after it was shown to have been concocted in the office of a Fleet Street newspaper."

"You had better," said Mr. Hancock, "put all this to Mr. Glanville himself. Meanwhile, if he didn't mention it, I have one more thing to tell you. We're to have tea amongst the ruins of the old abbey above the garden. I believe they're well worth seeing; and if any of you want to recover your primitive faith, there's a stone there with two holes in it made by St. Patrick's knees."

The ruins, which Glanville and Seaton had visited on the day of their arrival, justified Mr. Hancock's belief about them. They were not, indeed, extensive. They consisted, in addition to the chapel, merely of some cloisters which lost themselves in thickets of

mounded ivy; but their situation was beautiful. They rose from an irregular platform, which now was sleek with turf, and only the turf and one or two garden seats betrayed, except on occasions, the neighbourhood of contemporary man. Unless the spectator stood at the edge of the platform, the villa and its gardens were hidden from him. On the landward side were steeply ascending woods, and on the seaward nothing was visible but the fields of the sea itself and one grey rock round which the summer waves to-day were leaping in milky foam like a pack of fawning hounds.

By half-past four one of the garden-seats was illuminated by some patches of colour which would have sent the monks to their rosaries. There was the whiteness of a lady's dress, the redness of the poppies in her hat, and the redness of a parasol supported by a hand in a white glove. From the shadows of the parasol the dark eyes of Miss Leighton were looking fixedly at the sea, and her whole pose showed a certain suave contentment in her present situation, which was that of her host's sole companion. Some women captivate by fixing their eyes on men's. Miss Leighton could use hers in a way that was much more flattering—a way which seemed to suggest that no direct glance was necessary.

"This," she was saying, "reminds me of my own home—an old abbey in Wales. It, too, has a chapel above the sea, and Sunday after Sunday, when I'm there, I play the organ. Our afternoon service here will be very much more exciting. I'll tell you, Mr. Glanville," she went on, "what I like about you, and Lord Restormel also—if he wasn't quite so material. It is that you talk about these religious questions as if they were things in which men of the

world have an interest, and about which they have a right to talk because they are men of the world. You discuss them as people discuss other important matters. You don't make absurd good faces over them, as if you had swallowed senna, and put on an absurd good voice. For the matter of that, no more does Mr. Hancock. Hark—I can hear him now. There they come—the whole lot of them. But,” she said, rising, “Mr. Hancock reminds me of a water-wagtail washing himself in an intellectual saucer. One can't imagine a woman with a passion for Mr. Hancock.”

“So, you see,” said Glanville, to his friends who were now approaching, “here we are on the scene of action before you. Everything is ready. Tea is in the chapel. We shall be cooler there than outside, and we'll boil the kettle when we want it. As for you, Hancock, your chairman's table is prepared, unless you would sooner ensconce yourself in the curious old stone pulpit.”

“Well,” said Mr. Hancock presently, when, the view having been duly praised, the party was settling itself in the luminous twilight of a building, parts of whose roof remained, though the tracery of its windows was broken, “the chairman's business this afternoon will not be a very long one, because, Mr. Glanville, in accordance with your suggestion, I've explained the general nature of our present subject already. Still, I may as well sum matters up in a word or two. If no religion has been revealed to us in any special and supernatural way, it stands to reason that, in a sense, all religions must be natural—the outcome of our own faculties. The superstitions of savages are natural religions of a kind. But what we have to do with now is not the religion of

savages. It's natural religion as understood by thoughtful and educated men. We want to find out what is the essence of this—the irreducible minimum, to use grand old Gladstone's phrase, of feelings and beliefs involved in it: and Mr. Glanville proposes to get at this essence by distilling it from the Christianity of the Churches. I ought to warn him that one or two of our company think he is setting to work in a roundabout—perhaps in a wrong—way. We shall see. Well, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Glanville will now address us."

"I hope," said Glanville, "I may be able to remove your objections. Mr. Hancock has just given me two texts to preach from. We are not now concerned, he said, with the natural religion of savages. I interpret him as referring to the way in which primitive man explained the operations of nature by ascribing them to a host of little man-like deities. Such religion is nothing but a child's substitute for science; and if the sole office of religion were to explain the operations of nature, science long ago would have wiped it out of existence. Men have fought for the doctrine that God made the world merely because they considered it essentially bound up with the doctrine that a God exists who has dealing with the human soul."

"Yes," said Mr. Hancock, with an air of critical detachment, "I suppose we may admit that."

"Religion, then," said Glanville, "in our present sense of the word is primarily concerned with the nature and the destiny of the human soul. And now for the second text which Mr. Hancock has given me. If no religion is supernatural, all religions are natural. I admit that at first this sounds like a platitude; but it's not one. It means that every

religion which has claimed to be supernatural and miraculous must, if it be not that, be really the human soul appealing, and explaining itself, to itself; and religions have spread, and have been influential and enduring, in exact proportion as they have touched and expressed, and satisfied certain wants, and hopes, and feelings, which were elements of human nature already."

"Forgive me," said Mr. Brompton, "for interrupting you. But in all miraculous religions there is the element of deliberate imposture. You don't know priestcraft as I do. What do you say of these two precious modern doctrines, which have been draped round the Madonna like two new spangled petticoats—the doctrine of the Assumption, and the other one? Or what of the nauseous story of Margaret Mary Alacoque? Artificial, my dear sir—that's what these stories are—not natural."

"Let us admit," said Glanville, "that to any miraculous religion certain miraculous doctrines may be added in the manner you suggest. But they are merely a parasitic addition to doctrines already existing, which owe their origin and acceptance to very different causes. You'll understand me better when I've explained myself a little more in detail. Let us take, for example, a passage in the Nicene Creed, 'Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.' Think of it. Think what a light this doctrine, if it does not record an event, throws on the abysses of the human mind itself, which could conceive such an event and believe it to have taken place! Think again of another—the doctrine that God, mangled and bleeding, is turned by magic into a bit of bread, and that human souls are saved from hell by eating it. This, apart from its meaning, is

an invention as disgusting and childish as anything we could find in the religion of the lowest savage; and yet no doctrine has had an effect more profound on men of the loftiest intellect and the most exalted life. The explanation of the paradox is that the absurdity of what the doctrine states is the measure of the profundity of what it symbolises. Both these doctrines are symbols, are expressions, are revelations made by man to himself, of what the Churches call man's sinfulness, of his instinctive demand for deliverance from it, and his instinctive belief that some deliverance is possible."

"Ah," groaned Mr. Brompton, "the sense of sin—that's the human weakness on which all the old Churches trade."

"I am not discussing," said Glanville, "whether it's a weakness of human nature or not. All I am pointing out now is that it's a fact of human nature; and the more completely you rid your mind of all ideas of supernatural revelation, the more clearly you will realise that this sense of sin is natural."

"I would venture to remark," said Mr. Brompton, "that many races have shown small signs of it; and my view—our view—the view of the Ethical Church—is that it is merely a pain which mistakes its own nature and origin, and is trying to cure itself by a totally wrong medicine."

"My dear Mr. Brompton," said Mr. Hancock, "we are all very much hoping, when the time comes, to hear you speak as an apostle of the Ethical Church; but the views of that particular body are not yet under discussion. I think we have all of us grasped Mr. Glanville's meaning thus far. He means that the sense of sin—a distress of natural origin—has given rise to the doctrines he refers to, instead of

the doctrines giving rise to the sense of sin, just as—if I may put it in an illustration of my own—it was the course of the sun that gave rise to the myth of Apollo, not the myth of Apollo that made men believe in daylight.”

“Precisely,” said Mr. Glanville. “Mr. Seaton the other day was expressing the same idea. He called the Christian miracles the solar myths of the conscience. Mr. Seaton and I sometimes quarrel furiously. We shall have to quarrel again—most likely to-night; but here, I believe, we are in agreement. The myth of the Fall, no less than the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Real Presence, is, if we decline to accept it as the statement of a supernatural occurrence, explicable only as a symbol of certain natural facts; and these are man’s sense of a discord in his own nature which renders him dissatisfied with himself, his irrepressible demand that this discord should be healed, and his instinctive belief that the healing of it is in some way possible. If it were not for these facts of our common human nature, the Incarnation would have been meaningless for us as an event. If it were not for these facts, it would have been both meaningless and impossible as a belief. Unless man were an eating animal the present of a loaf would mean nothing to him; and if no loaf were offered to him, he would never invent one in his dreams. In the same way God the Father, with whom Christ was identified, and to whom He was supposed to guide us, is the symbol—or if we like to call it so, an expression in intellectual terms—firstly of what man conceives the supreme Good to be; and secondly, of his sense that this Good is connected with himself somehow

in a way which enables it to respond to his own personal desire for it."

"Now that is just what I——" Mrs. Vernon began, and stopped.

"Yes," said Glanville. "That's what you——"

"I was going to say," Mrs. Vernon went on, "that that's what I should call natural religion—just that—a belief in a personal God, and I suppose an immortal soul. I shouldn't call it any kind of symbol. I should simply call it natural religion itself."

"Your definition," said Glanville, "is a common one; but it's inaccurate. It's at the same time too wide and too narrow. By the word religion savages mean less; all civilised men mean more; many civilised men, such as the Buddhists, mean something different."

"Oh," said Mrs. Vernon, "if you're going to take in the Buddhists—why, they, I have always understood, have really no God at all. And then, Mr. Glanville, if you're going to take in the Buddhists, why are you at such pains to extract for us the distinctive essence of Christianity?"

"Only be patient," said Glanville, "and I'll answer all your questions. I'll come back presently to Mr. Brompton's objections also. I don't mean, Mrs. Vernon, that the natural residuum of Christianity is identical with the natural religion which we are here trying to define. I mean that it contains this religion in a form which will enable us very easily to find it. But before I go on, I should like to be quite certain that you understand and agree with what I have said about this Christian residuum itself. You see, don't you, that if there is not in man, to begin with, a natural sense of discord, a

natural desire for peace, and a natural tendency to believe that such peace is attainable, men could no more have constructed the Christian religion for themselves than they could have understood it, had it been revealed by God."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Vernon. "I follow you so far now."

"And," continued Glanville, "to show you that I am not misleading you, I will call in one of the greatest of the Christian philosophers to support me. 'The misery of man,' he says, 'proves his greatness. He is miserable; but he is great in knowing it. To know God without knowing one's own misery is the barren pride of the philosopher. To know one's own misery without knowing the Redeemer is the despair of the atheist. Both kinds of knowledge are necessary for the human soul; and the Christian religion consists essentially in uniting them'! Such, according to Pascal, is the human kernel of Christianity—or the human soil in which the divine message germinates; and according to us, the soil in which it originates."

"Is it," said Mr. Brompton, with the air of a musician who has heard a discord, "is it quite, quite impermissible for me to protest once more against this constant dwelling on misery—sin—misery? The sense of this, Mr. Glanville, is not universal. No—no—pray believe me it's not. Not even in the past has it been the root of all religions. Hereafter it will be the root of none. To look at natural religion through Christianity is to look at the sun through smoked spectacles."

"I will," said Glanville, "give the sense of sin and the desire of reconciliation other names presently, to which you will take no exception. Let me

finish what I want to say about sin and misery first. You suggest that the sense of them is a kind of local disease, confined to the Christianised peoples, and perpetuated amongst them by a sort of mental contagion. The Churches, you seem to think, are hospitals which swarm with the germs of it, and breed what they were built to cure."

"You couldn't," said Mr. Brompton, "have put the views of our new Church better."

"Well," said Glanville, "if you won't think me wearisome, let me illustrate the disease by examples, which I will abandon to your more minute reprehensions. Here is an old story of a monk, who before he took his vows had enjoyed great riches, and had married, and had had a son. When the son was approaching manhood, he was told who his father was. 'Your father,' it was said to him, 'is a very rich man still. He owns four gold mines. Go to him; claim them; and he will give them to you.' And the son claimed them of his father; and the monk said, 'They shall be yours, my son; and in each mine you shall find a different kind of gold. The gold of the first is to know thine own soul's misery. The gold of the second is to rid thyself of the lusts and the hates of the body. The gold of the third is to love all living things; and the gold of the fourth is the death of thy whole self, which is life.'"

"Beautiful," said Mrs. Vernon half aloud. Miss Leighton watched Glanville with grave, expectant eyes. Mr. Brompton twisted himself in his chair. "The writers of the *Acta Sanctorum*," he muttered, "were cunning in their own business. They knew a literary trick or two."

"And here," resumed Glanville, "are some verses,

which I copied out this morning, not from the penitential psalms, but from another book of devotion, in which Mr. Brompton will recognise a reproduction of their morbid spirit. 'Oh, God, my transgressions are many: my sins are a great multitude. In the anger of His heart the Lord has cast me down: in the strength of His heart my God has become mine enemy. May the Lord, may He who has made me, take me by the hand. May He guide the breath of my mouth, and order what my hand doeth.'"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Brompton. "There's Pascal's conception of human nature to a T. A terrible responsibility rests on these Christian Churches—terrible—terrible. They have not only befooled the world with their supernatural fables—these we can blow away like fluff—but they have corrupted the feelings and impulses of the human mind itself, from which—as you say very truly, Mr. Glanville—here I'm quite with you—natural religion springs. They have turned the religious impulse from a healthy appetite into a pathological craving."

"What I want to show everybody here," said Glanville, "is that Mr. Brompton is a little too hard on the Churches. He recognises Pascal's spirit in the story of the monk and the four mines, and in that short, psalm-like fragment which seems to be an echo of David; but they both come from sources of which Pascal knew nothing, and from men who knew nothing of him, his Church, or any book of the Bible. My monk was no hero of the *Acta Sanctorum*. He was Gautama. He preceded all the Churches by four hundred years, and his witness comes to us not from Jordan, but from the Ganges. And as to my penitential psalm—the writer of it

wept his tears beside the waters of Babylon, not only before a Jew had ever hung up his harp there, but ages before Abraham was preparing to chop Isaac in pieces. So, you see, Mr. Brompton, this sense of sin and misery is very much wider and more normal than you seemed willing to allow."

"Mr. Glanville," said Mr. Brompton, "you're a clever tactician in argument: and you think you've got me in a corner. But you haven't. Let the sense of sin be as natural and widespread as you like. What of it? I say, what of it? Look here, Mr. Glanville, the prehistoric races, of whom you showed us a vision in your orangery, suffered from a fear of wild beasts. To this in time was added the fear of malignant spirits. We have grown out of these fears, though to do so was the work of millenniums. In the same way we shall grow—ay, we are fast growing now—out of this paralysing sense of sin. The truth is setting us free in a sense deeper than the priest's sense. That's our view—the view of the new Church; but let me say something more. We don't deny that this pain, this dissatisfaction, which calls itself the sense of sin, has a natural origin in the constitution of the human being. The pain is here, there, everywhere—by the Ganges, the Euphrates, and the Thames and the Mississippi. What we do say is that, in conceiving of it as a sense of sin, men have misread its nature. In reality it's a composite sense, partly biological in its origin, partly sociological. Biologically speaking, it's a sense of imperfect adjustment, like a sense of sickness, or of liability to it. Sociologically speaking, it is a sense of the supreme truth that the individual, in isolation from, or in antagonism to, his kind, is a miserable stunted creature, with all his energies

wasted, all his sympathies stifled, and that he can only reach his full development—the glorious development he's capable of—by fusing himself, in his acts and thoughts, with the race of which he forms a part. There's a simple, scientific, natural religion for you, if you like. I can't do it justice now. You've promised me an opportunity of doing that later. I only want to show you this—that we start with the same facts as you—with imperfection, isolation, weakness, dissatisfaction; and our religion is a religion for the same reason that Christianity is. It's a religion because it appeals to our sense of these evils, and offers us all a cure for them—this being the union of the individual, by social action and feeling, with a something which is congruous to himself, but infinitely larger and more enduring."

"That's better put," whispered Lady Snowdon, "than I should have expected. But why will he gesticulate and make eyes like an actor?"

"Mr. Brompton," said Glanville, "I thank you. For the present our disagreements are over. In dwelling on man's sense of sin, and his belief that the pain of it can be remedied, as the natural root and essence of all civilised religion, I did so merely because what Pascal and Buddha both call man's misery has been interpreted as a sense of sin by all the great religions of the past; and I dwelt upon the elaborate doctrines of the Christian religion in particular, because for us, who are so familiar with them, they are like an enormous picture thrown on the clouds by a magic lantern from a slide which is the human heart. Your own religion, however signal its merits, is too new to afford us any such illustration as this; but the definition of religion to which I am trying to lead you all will include Mr.

Brompton's, no less than Pascal's. Mr. Brompton agrees with Pascal, and with all the civilised world, that what we may call a certain spiritual distress is indigenous in the heart of man. Whether man is distressed because he thinks himself sinful, or finds personal pleasure unsatisfying, or the drama of life petty, makes no matter to us now. In each case he is smarting under a Worse, and conceives and desires a Better. That's the vital point. The vital meaning of the word Religion for all of us is a remedy which the mind applies to itself for this state of things; and in every religion the nature of the promised remedy is the same. It is an expansion of the individual life into something which is greater than itself, but which is at the same time congruous to it—something the greatness of which will enlarge our littleness, the goodness of which will appease our longing, and the permanence of which will bring us rest. You don't, Mr. Brompton, quarrel with that definition, do you?"

"On the contrary," said Mr. Brompton, "I accept it as full and admirable."

"Well," said Glanville, looking round him, "and what about all you others? Doesn't this cover the inmost meaning of Christianity?"

"I suppose it does," said Mrs. Vernon. "But Christianity means more."

"It no doubt does," said Glanville, "like all other religions. The point here is that it does mean this at all events: and neither it, nor any other religion, can possibly mean less. Before we begin our tea, let me give you one final illustration. Look at that altar. Men have knelt at it, transubstantiating by the alchemy of their own souls the wafer into bread from heaven, which was also a bread of sorrow.

For them this act of union with the supreme Good, was accomplished through tears and a mortification of all the senses. The Good was accessible only as a God worn and wasted, to whose sorrow no sorrow was like, and in whom was no beauty to be desired. And now, turn from the altar—look through the western door. There is the hyacinth of the sea, which was made flesh in the body of Aphrodite—there are the dancing-places of Aurora—there is the innumerable laughter which the eyes of Prometheus looked upon. There is a beauty to which the spirit of man longs to go out as though on a sea-gull's wings. Or let me say, if you don't like Aphrodite, that this other eternal Word was made flesh in Apollo—Apollo with his gloomless eyes. What a contrast to the suffering Christ! And yet no one can say that the contrast is one between degradation and elevation. It is a contrast between one form of elevation and another. Apollo, too, was the object of a religion; and his religion was so far like that of Christ that it consisted in the union of the individual life with something larger, more beautiful, more harmonious, more enduring than itself. In both religions there is the same launching forth of the soul, and in both the same belief that it will be received by the everlasting arms. Religion in all its forms resolves itself into this—the desire of man, imperfect and dissatisfied with himself, for something greater; and a belief that he can, by some management of his conduct and his feelings, induce this Greater to reciprocate and reward his advances. Well, as nobody seems inclined to dispute this, our idea of natural religion is, I think, sufficiently clear for the purpose of our discussion to-night; and if other people agree with me, I propose that we turn

to tea, and that our chairman should declare our first lesson for the day to be ended. We'll have our second to-night; and in that we shall enter on a new inquiry altogether. We have reduced natural religion to its simplest and most essential elements. To-night we shall ask how far the methods of science, which we have seen to be fatal to the old religion of miracle, will support us in the beliefs and the hopes which the religion of miracle symbolises."

BOOK V
DESCENSUS AVERNI

CHAPTER I

THE warmth of the night was such that, instead of sitting in the portico, the party had betaken themselves after dinner to a certain projection of the terrace, where the air was freshened by the sea, which was splashing a few yards below. The brilliance of the moon was dazzling. The plunge of the breakers showered it on the darkness of the grating shingle; and it flashed in the middle of Lord Restormel's shirt-front, from an Indian gem, too striking almost for the taste even of Sir Roderick Harborough.

"This is the very night," said Lord Restormel, looking up at the stars, "this is the very place, for facing that question of questions to which we have come at last."

His words were charged with a certain kind of emotion, not perhaps unconnected with the magnetic propinquity of Miss Leighton, the edge of whose white dress touched one of his boots like foam. They were followed by an exclamation from Mr. Hancock, the tone of which was singularly different.

"How nasty!" he said, "how extremely nasty! I seem to have spilt some soup—I think—on my white waistcoat. I must go in and change it. Don't let me keep you all waiting. My dear Lord Restormel, it's the very night for you to be chairman.

You know the order of our proceedings. Take my place, I beg you, at all events till I come back."

For a moment Lord Restormel was doubtful. He was halting between two desires. The one was to make intermittent love to Miss Leighton; the other was to exhibit to her another side of his nature, which also had been vaguely stimulated by the mystery of her dark eyes. The latter desire, as genuine as its rival, conquered.

"All right," he said. "If everyone is willing, I'll begin. We have been talking this afternoon of Christianity, with its familiar and exclusive theology, whose longest tentacles can grasp but a few thousand years of time, a fraction of the human family, a microscopic portion of space. I am," he said, turning for a moment to Miss Leighton, "comparing in my own mind religion made thus familiar to us to a fire-lit cottage at night, enclosing a sailor's child. The blinds are down, the darkness is shut out, the flickerings of the hearth give a friendliness even to the shadows in the farthest corner. The child sees everything intelligibly adjusted to its needs. If it is hungry, there is food for it in the great mysterious cupboards; and when it is tired, it knows that there is a room above, where a pillow of rest awaits it, to be reached by a narrow stair. We are like such a child who, having taken its cottage for the world, suddenly opens the door, and finds itself in a night like this, confronted by all the stars, and by all the thunderings of the sea. Will these reproduce for us the order which we found indoors? Will these realities of the Universe provide us with a new home, which, compared with the cottage of Christian miracles, will be a palace? Or will they leave us roofless, with no home at all? That's our question,

Rupert, in general terms, isn't it? Our friend Mr. Hancock would, no doubt, have put it in a more business-like way."

"You put it," murmured Miss Leighton, "far better than he could."

"And now," Lord Restormel continued, "let us come down to details. Now for the manner in which our question may best be dealt with. In defining religion this afternoon, we very rightly reduced it to a sense of, and a belief in, a Something greater than man's soul, but yet, as we said, so far akin to it, that, on certain terms, it and the soul can be united. But when we consider more narrowly the religion which we have defined thus, we see that this Greater Something may be conceived of in two different ways. By most minds it is identified with a personal, or quasi-personal principle, which pervades the entire Universe. When conceived of thus it is generally called God—a name which even Buddhists might give it; though, so far as I know, they don't. You'll admit, Mr. Brompton, that God, in this comprehensive sense, is supposed to be the object of religion, by most people, from Spinoza down to the Pope."

"At present," said Mr. Brompton. "Yes. That's the idea of religion which unfortunately still prevails amongst the majority."

"Well," continued Lord Restormel, "Mr. Brompton and his friends conceive of the Greater Something in a new way, and in one quite different from this. In due time Mr. Brompton will—so we hope—expound to us his own gospel; but we are going to ask him for the moment to hold his own ideas in reserve, and join with us first in considering natural religion under its commonest form, which is that of a Theism or a moral Pantheism—it's difficult to dis-

tinguish very sharply between them—and in asking how far such a natural religion as this is supported by, or consistent with, the actual facts of nature.”

“By all means,” said Mr. Brompton, “by all means. Nothing could suit my book better. You, in fact, will by your inquiry be preparing my way before me.”

“That’s right—capital !” The encouraging words were Mr. Hancock’s, who, resplendent in a clean waistcoat, had returned, and was listening in the background. “What, Lord Restormel,” he continued, “you’d rather I took your place? Really, now? Then I can’t refuse. Yes—yes—let us tackle the old Theism first ; and if that won’t wash, and if we find that we want something of the sort, we’ll come to Mr. Brompton’s substitute, and see if it will do better. Well, Mr. Glanville, our ears are at your service.”

“I think,” said Glanville, “I shall begin our discussion best by striking a match, and reading you a short extract which I have made from the writings of one of our most fervent modern Theists, who sees in natural Theism the assured successor of Christianity. ‘What I conceive,’ this writer says, ‘to be the vital difference between Theism and Christianity is that, as an explanation of things, Theism can never be disproved. The man of science may not adopt it ; but by no advance of science that I, at any rate, can foresee can it be driven out of the field. Christianity is in a totally different position. Its grounds are not philosophical, but literary and historical. Hence the Christian explanation is vulnerable in a way in which the theistic explanation can never be vulnerable.’ Well,” Glanville continued, “what we are about to see is this—that anyone who holds the

opinion expressed in what I have just read is living in a fool's paradise. We shall see that every doctrine, and every hope, which makes Theism a real religion—and in virtue of which Theism has, as we saw this afternoon, been the vital element of the great moral mythologies—is just as vulnerable by science, if we grasp what science means, as the most impossible doctrines of these mythologies themselves. The idea uppermost in the mind of the writer I have just quoted was no doubt this—that science can never, in any formal way, prove that the Power which has made or pervades the Universe, is not personal or quasi-personal, in some sense of these words. Now to this sort of argument it would be very easy to answer that there are many things which no one believes, though no one can formally disprove them.”

“We can't disprove,” said Mr. Brompton, “the existence of a bottle in Mars with blood in it which liquefies like the blood of St. Januarius.”

“But there's no need,” resumed Glanville, “to fall back on that retort: for if Theism was nothing but the attribution of a vague personality to the Power behind the Universe, we might call it a conjectural philosophy, but it wouldn't be a religion at all. It would certainly not be what this ardent writer means by religion. In order to make a religion of it two things are necessary. One is that we attribute to our Power, not merely a bare Personality, but a Personality which is, in some human sense, good. The other is that we supplement our conception of this good Power with a conception of the human soul as something essentially kindred to it. Theism is essentially an affair of spiritual give and take; and the human party no less than the divine

must be duly qualified for engaging in the supreme transaction."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "we can all of us see that. We must, I suppose, at all events, be responsible for our own deeds, and have another life, and so on."

"These are points," said Glanville, "which we will talk about in due time. Anyhow, you see that Theism has two main doctrines, like the two piers of a bridge, one of them being a piece of definite natural theology, the other a piece of what we may call spiritual anthropology. Here we come to the point which the writer whom I have just quoted misses. Both these doctrines, contrary to what this writer says, are just as accessible to science—are just as directly susceptible of minute and dispassionate investigation—as any historical question connected with Christian evidences. We shall easily see how. The case of the first is simplest—the theistic doctrine of God : so I propose that we begin with that. Lord Restormel said just now that this was the very place, the very night, for such an inquiry. So it is. The order, the beauty, and the sublime immensity of the Universe could not exhibit themselves to us more impressively than they are doing now. Science and Theism both alike tell us that this incalculable whole is the work or the self-manifestation of one single power or principle. Theism adds that this whole, throughout all its parts and processes, is the self-manifestation of a power or principle which is good."

"If I," said Lady Snowdon, "may be allowed to intrude with a remark, I should like to quote an observation which Mill often made to my father. He said that to talk of the goodness, or even of the

wisdom of God, as being manifested by the Universe as a whole, was to talk nonsense. Goodness, he said, means nothing if not referable to sentient things, and wisdom means nothing if not referable to some known end. Therefore, he said, nature can exhibit God's goodness only in so far as it is the vehicle of God's dealing with ourselves, nor can it show His wisdom either, in any other way. For except in so far as nature ministers to sentient life we are unable to conceive any end for which it should exist at all, and are consequently unable to tell whether it is wisely contrived or no. But, my dear Mr. Glanville, go on. I beg your pardon for interrupting you."

"You have," said Glanville, "interrupted me only by anticipating me. You have shown more trenchantly perhaps than I should have done myself that the distinctive feature of the theistic doctrine of God is really a doctrine that the Universe is infinitely good to man. Well, for the Theist's view there's a great deal to be said; and I'm bound to admit that when we look on such a sky as this it's difficult not to believe that the Theist's view is right. The other day, when I was alone in the launch with Mr. Seaton, I was talking about this very question. I alluded to the curious longing for something beyond themselves that is roused in us so often by the colours of the sea and sky, and he had just begun to give me his own philosophy of the matter when something stopped him. I wish he would say now what he was going to say then."

"Do, Mr. Seaton," said Lady Snowdon. "Do." Lady Snowdon, who from the first had been pleased by Seaton's appearance, had lately discovered some satisfactory details about his family, and was quite

prepared now to give him her most protecting attention.

"I would rather," replied Seaton, "keep my own contribution to our debate till we came to consider the nature and the mind of man. But I was, on the occasion to which Mr. Glanville refers, going to have quoted to him—and I will willingly do so now—two expressions of this feeling with regard to nature which with special clearness show us what its content is. One is taken from Wordsworth; the other from Thoreau, the sylvan hermit of America. Thoreau tells us that in the loneliness of his dwelling among the woods all the sights and sounds surrounding him—even the raindrops pattering amongst the leaves, and the pine-needles lying at his feet—made him distinctly aware of the presence of a life kindred to his own—made him recognise Nature as his sweet and beneficent companion—a companion so living and intimate that he could never be alone anywhere. As to Wordsworth, I had intended to quote this—

" ' What mind was his, when from the naked top
Of some bold headland he beheld the sun
Rise up and bathe the world with light? . . .
The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love.' "

I needn't give you more. Both passages, though of course the last one especially, show what the faith, the spirit, and the scope of natural Theism are."

"Thank you, Alistair," said Glanville; "my sympathies are entirely with you. But my business now is not to express my sympathies, but to speak as one of those whom the spirit of science has girded, and carried perhaps whither they would not. What I shall have to point out to you about natural Theism

is this—that it no sooner escapes from the cottage of Christian miracle than it builds for itself, and can only live in, a cottage of the sentimental imagination, which, though more extensive than the other, is knocked down just as easily by a touch of scientific fact. Let us take the case of these two men, Wordsworth and Thoreau, one of whom sees unutterable love in the clouds, whilst the other finds the forest his kindly and divine companion. Now just let us suppose for a moment that Thoreau and Wordsworth were our contemporaries, and these passages which Mr. Seaton has commended to our notice had been written by them on the same day, two or three years ago. Let us suppose also that Thoreau, in his Massachusetts wood, and Wordsworth, on the naked top of his bold English headland, had each possessed a telescope which would show them clearly what was going on in the West Indies. If they could have stolen a moment from the unutterable love of the Westmorland clouds, and the friendliness of Massachusetts raindrops, they might through their telescopes have seen other clouds, and another kind of rain—clouds which stifled and rain which was red hot—asphyxiating, torturing, murdering, without discrimination or pity, the entire population of a West Indian island. What, I ask you, in the presence of such facts as these, becomes of the maundering of our two devout gentlemen about the sympathy and the unutterable love of the Power behind nature? If the Power is, as Wordsworth believed it to be, the omnipotent and omnipresent God, the revelation of His character by means of natural phenomena can't be confined to sunrises in the north of England, or the forest scenery of one state in America. If the prettiness of His sunrises

and His forest give us grounds for thinking Him good, the West Indian catastrophe gives us grounds of a very much stronger kind for thinking of Him either as a clumsy fool or a monster. My dear Mrs. Vernon, you needn't look so shocked. Suppose that, when you were visiting amongst the poor, your esteem had been won by a woman who, whenever you called, was nursing one of her children, and brooding over it with extreme affection; and that subsequently, one fine day, you discovered that she had six others, and that she had bored the stomachs of three of them with a red-hot poker, and was preparing to roast the remaining three by the fire in the back kitchen. Would you still look on your protégée as the ideally wise, the ideally loving mother?"

"I should look on her," said Mrs. Vernon rather tartly, "as a horrible criminal lunatic, and I should say that her affection for one child did but add to the ghastliness of her mad cruelty to the rest."

"Precisely," said Glanville, "and when natural Theism—the creed which differs from Christianity, because nothing can ever disprove it—insists on investing the Universe with a moral character of some kind, science shows that this character is such a mixture of what is good and detestable, that it can only be the character of a criminal lunatic likewise. If you answer that the existence of such a cosmic monstrosity is incredible, I altogether agree with you; but we can, so far as scientific observation guides us, only escape from supposing that such a monstrosity exists by refusing to attribute to the Universe any moral character at all."

The light of theological acrimony was shining in Mrs. Vernon's eyes. "Science!" she exclaimed, "I don't call earthquakes science. Everyone has

known about earthquakes ever since the world began."

"I suppose," said Glanville, laughing, "by these admirably brief expressions of yours you mean that the language of earthquakes and volcanic catastrophes is too blatant, too rhetorical, too frequently reiterated, and too easily apprehended by the wretched man in the street, to be worthy of any serious attention. Well, I admit that these noisy phenomena are rather intemperate in their attacks on God's goodness to man, and if their rhetoric stood by itself, we should, perhaps, not be discomposed by it. But it does not stand by itself. You don't call earthquakes science; but let us go to what you do call science, and you will find that everything which those demagogues, the earthquake and the volcano, shout, science repeats and amplifies, and sharpens to a fatal point, as though it were splitting up a bludgeon into a quiverful of poisoned arrows. Everyone has known about earthquakes ever since the world began. I will now call your attention to another order of facts, which was utterly unknown to the world till a very short time ago. These are the facts of nature which, when taken together, make up the process commonly called evolution. I needn't explain to Mrs. Vernon, who knew Mr. Darwin personally, what, so far as living things are concerned, the process of evolution is. I will only remind her of this—it is a process which depends on the fact that living creatures in general have a far larger number of children than can ever come to maturity; that out of each litter or family some are better fitted for the struggle of life than others; that the fittest survive, and the rest prematurely perish. And this process of struggle, selec-

tion, and survival, having for its basis indefinite over-production, underlies the historical progress of man, just as it underlies the production of the human species. This is all so familiar that I need not do more than mention it; but I had just to mention it, for it leads us up to the fact on which I am anxious to fix the attention of all of you. The Power behind nature, as science sees it, if it shows any favour to living things at all, favours the race or type, and is absolutely careless of the individual. And now consider this Power, as seen or conceived of by the Theist. The entire religion of the Theist is based on the passionate belief that the conduct of his Supreme Power is of a kind precisely opposite; that the individual is the object on which all His care is concentrated; that the race or the type exists for its sake only; and that His perfect goodness, His perfect care and wisdom, are present in His dealing with each single human life as completely as they are in His dealings with the entire and enormous Universe. All the doctrines, thoughts, hopes, trusts, and emotions, that make up the religion of Theism, here come to a head, and this head science quietly cuts off. I don't know," continued Glanville, "if, in order to make that point clear to you, it is necessary for me to pile up the agony, and indulge in more metaphors, or to pepper you with details like a scattering charge of swan-shot. I could, of course, remind you how the entire scheme of life, from its lowest forms to its highest, is made up of fighting and murder—how this process goes on in the very veins of our own body. I could show you how the more minutely we study the organic kingdom, the more plainly does Nature's indifference to the individual life appear. All these things are matters of common knowledge.

So I'll only ask if any one of you here can say anything in objection to the conclusion I have just drawn."

"I," said Seaton, "can say a very great deal when we come to approach the question, not through nature, but through man. But even now I can say something which is fatal, Rupert, to the case as put by you."

"And I," said Lady Snowdon, "could say a little something also. But let Mr. Seaton begin. Go on, Mr. Seaton."

"I can put what I mean," said Seaton, "in a very few words. I know little of the details of Darwinism, and even if true, they merely represent the method by which the development of certain ideas has been realised. Philosophy cares nothing about mere trifles like these. Hegel understood development long before the days of Darwinism, and he understood the essence of the process, whereas Darwin studied only the incidents. Well, let us take the unfittest human being you can imagine—one, Rupert, who, according to you, would most conclusively prove Nature's carelessness of the individual. This man, after all, is a very complicated—a very specific—thing. He's more than a sponge, a lizard, or even the cleverest monkey; and the more widely he differs from the animals that Darwin gives him as forbears, the more plain is it that the man-idea must have been latent in his antecedents from the beginning. How this man-idea comes to acquire its exteriority is, after all, quite a subordinate question."

"My dear Mr. Seaton," said Lady Snowdon, "I don't think you've helped me much, but, for all I know, we may both mean the same thing. My Broad Church brother, who is by no means a fool

altogether, used always to be insisting that the principle of natural selection did nothing to explain the variations from which selection is made. It merely weeds out the bad, but does not produce the good: but the good are produced somehow, and they are produced always on intelligible lines. Therefore," said Lady Snowdon, with a laugh, "this, of course, was the end of it—these variations were the work of a good God, and my brother was right in wearing a surplice after all. Do you think, Mr. Glanville, that there's anything in that argument?"

"As you rightly conjectured," said Glanville, "it's very much the same as Mr. Seaton's; and I'm perfectly willing to admit that there may be great truth in both. But what sort of truth? My dear Alistair, it's a truth which does no service to Theism. Both these arguments are nothing more than repetitions of the old argument with which every child is familiar—Paley's argument from the watch to the intelligent watchmaker. If, never having seen such a thing as a watch before, we found one lying in the road, and then discovered its use and the perfection of its ingenious mechanism, we should certainly attribute its production to the skill and the design of somebody. In the same way, if we take the body of man, which is more ingenious and perfect than any watch in the world, we attribute its production to the design and the perfect skill of God. Now this way of putting the argument has one great merit at all events. It shows us what the nature of the argument from design is. It is a strict application to God's works and methods of a judgment derived from man's. Man's body, like the watch, fulfils certain definite functions. It must, there-

fore, like the watch, have been deliberately contrived to fulfil them. The maker of man's body, as Mr. Seaton prefers to put it, must have worked up to definite and preconceived ideas. Well," continued Glanville, "when Theists argue in this way, it is best, up to a certain point, for argument's sake, to agree with them. Let us grant that a God exists, which we infer, as we infer the watchmaker; but if we infer Him like the watchmaker, we must judge Him like the watchmaker also. We must judge of His qualities partly by the merits of the things He makes and partly also—though this is not so apparent—by the methods He employs in making them. If we agree that His skill is perfect because we think that His works are perfect, we are, if we happen to find His works defective, equally bound to argue that His skill is defective also. Now in Paley's time it was assumed by the world at large that the perfection of man's body for the purposes of his life was absolute. We realise to-day that such is by no means the case. The healthiest bodies are vitiated by radical defects in their structure. Like ill-made watches, they are liable to go wrong. They are encumbered by the remains of contrivances which to man are wholly useless, and they are not even perfectly adapted for going on two legs instead of four. And if this is true of the best bodies, what shall we say of the worst? If the good watch shows that the watchmaker knows his business, the bad watch shows that as often as not he doesn't. But far more important than the merits or defects of the results is the nature of the methods by which the artist attains them. The divine method in Paley's time was an absolutely impenetrable mystery. It is a mystery no longer. We have managed to look

into the workshop, and have caught the artist at his work; and we know that in order to obtain one relatively good result, he invariably makes a hundred, or even a thousand, failures. What should we say of a watchmaker, if we found that his watches, which *would* go, were merely a few exceptions amongst a pile of watches that wouldn't? Or what should we think of a painter of skies and clouds, if we found that his masterpieces exhibited in a dealer's shop, were merely selections from a thousand meaningless canvases, against which he had thrown his paint-pot on the chance of something good resulting? Well, Lady Snowdon, so much for the artist's skill; but the case of human beings is incomparably worse for the Deity than the case of the pictures or watches is for the artist or watchmaker. The bad watch is bad in a negative way only. It only fails to realise the workman's assumed purpose; but the defective human being is more than a negative failure to realise what the Theist assumes to be the purpose of the artist God. It is the active realisation of something by which His purpose is positively defeated, this assumed purpose being the goodness and the happiness of each living product. We must, therefore, if we take the watchmaker argument seriously, conclude that, whilst the goodness or happiness of the few human watches which *will* go represents the luck of a blunderer rather than the triumph of a master, the badness or misery of the many human watches which *won't* go betrays, with regard to the watches taken separately, cruel indifference as to whether they go or not. By this means, no doubt, we get at a God of some kind; but it is a God whom it is cowardice to fear and sycophancy or folly to adore. I can, however, if I shan't be tiring you, answer Mr. Seaton

and Lady Snowdon in better words than my own. I had a letter this morning from Mr. Cosmo Brock, whose soul has been much exercised by the conferences of his clerical neighbours. With the aid of one or two matches I will read you a part of what he says. It refers to this very question.

“ ‘Let me take,’ he says, ‘as an illustration of this’ —he means of the folly of the clergy—‘an argument which the defenders of supernaturalism have been recently parading in my vicinity, and which is, I am told, now current in sacerdotal circles generally. They fix on the fact that the process of natural selection is a selection from what are called “sports,” those only surviving which are best fitted to survive. The selection, say these sages, may doubtless be a natural process; but the varieties and sports themselves, from which the selection is made, obviously represent the direct interference and design of what someone yesterday called the Supreme Contriver. Consider we, Mr. Glanville—you and I—the character of this argument. If any incident in the evolutionary process suggests what in man would be stupidity, or wanton recklessness, or at best the fumbings of an artist, never skilful and now completely blind, that incident is the occurrence of these very varieties. In order that one creature may be produced fit to survive, a multitude are produced fit only to perish miserably; and this random method of production—think of it—is now fixed upon by the defenders of the prevalent religion, as the best, and, indeed, the only example, which they can find in nature, of the unutterable skill and wisdom of their odd personal Creator. For me,’ he goes on, ‘and, I believe, for all thinkers free from the theistic bias, the one conclusion to which the study

of existence leads is that whilst the elements of human intelligence, ethical sense, etc., exist in diffusion throughout the cosmos, they have no relation, even remotely conceivable by ourselves, to the facts of human consciousness which we designate by the terms in question. To call the cosmos, or the all, or the Supreme Power, or the Supreme Being, bad, or stupid, or even imperfect, would, in my judgment, be the folly of a petulant child: but to call it good, or wise, or benevolent, would be a folly of still greater magnitude."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Brompton. "I've always maintained, ever since I looked at his works, that Brock is perfectly right with that grand name which he has invented for the Universal Cause—for the Sum of Things—the Unknowable. How completely it puts an end to that moral and religious star-gazing, which is really responsible for all the tumbles of the human race into cess-pools! Morally, we neither bless the Sum of Things, nor do we curse it. As an object of religion we simply sweep it aside. We have no more clue to its meaning than we have to the politics of Sirius. The true object of religion——"

"Mr. Brompton, Mr. Brompton," said Mr. Hancock, "you are always what our Yankee friends call so previous. We have promised to listen to your exposition of your own religion by-and-by. At present we've not quite finished with even the first part of this theistic business. But we've very nearly finished with the first part, I take it. All's over—eh, Mr. Glanville?—except the shouting."

"I think," said Glanville, "that all is over except the shouting, to this extent. We have seen that, if we consider the Universe as a fact external to our-

selves, and consider the way in which it deals with ourselves individually, there is no trace in it of any of those qualities which the Theist imputes to God, or which would alone make it a worthy, or even a possible object of religion. It only escapes being a moral blot by being a moral blank. But perhaps I shall shock the ardent spirit of Mr. Brompton if I say that, in spite of this, I can still conceive it possible, that in turning from the Universe without to the spirit of man within, we might find in our own minds the key to the dark enigma, and derive a light which would show us that Goodness in the Universe after all which theistic religion imputes to it. Let me hasten to add that, though I can conceive this, I don't believe it to be the fact." Mr. Brompton, who had been looking a little blank, now at once cheered up again. "On the contrary," Glanville continued, "I believe that our failure to find God in the skies is only the overture to our failure to find Him in the human soul—that is to say, so far as science can guide us. But Mr. Seaton and many other people don't agree with me. They believe that our minds are wells, with the truth of Theism at the bottom of them. See—here come the servants, with trays, bottles, and tumblers. Let us refresh ourselves for a few minutes: and then from the theistic God we will turn to the theistic man."

CHAPTER II

NOW," said Mr. Hancock presently, when the last bottle of soda-water required by the disputants had been disposed of, "before we go on, allow me to remind you all that we are about to consider a quite new side of our subject. We are going to turn now from the external Universe to man, and in fixing our attention on man, we are going to ask two questions. Can we find within—in the human mind—that evidence of a God in the Universe which the Universe itself won't give us? And farther, even if a God of the requisite kind be found—or even three Gods if you like—is the nature of man, as revealed by science, such as to render him capable of that specific—I suppose I must say that sublime—relation with Him in the absence of which Theism means nothing? Mr. Glanville proposes to begin with the second of these two questions, and will confine himself at first to showing us what the qualities are which man must possess to make this sublime relation possible. Now, Mr. Glanville, will you begin?"

"For the moment, at all events," said Glanville, "these qualities may be reduced to two, and you will find in them very old acquaintances. First, man must, according to the theistic theory, possess a power of spontaneous will or choice—a power of self-guidance in the direction of the divine Goodness,

to which self-guidance, when man exercises it, the divine Will responds. Secondly the nature of the theistic man must be such that his making, or his failure to make, the spontaneous Godward act, is a matter whose importance to himself not only renders trivial every other success or failure on his own part that he can imagine, but transcends his imagination altogether. Otherwise Theism might represent a truth, but the truth might be negligible, and to many people not even interesting. Well, this supreme importance can be real on one or other of two suppositions only—on the supposition either that the human soul is immortal, or else that it will die ultimately into the larger divine life, but will, unless it choose extremely well, have to live through a miserable succession of individual lives first. The Buddhist adopts the second supposition, the Theist adopts the first; but the human mind or soul, so far as the body is concerned, is just as immortal according to one creed as the other. I must also add, with regard to its power of free choice, that this involves something more than the power of choice itself. We can all see that God—or the Universe, if there is no God separate from it—must be the source of His or its own actions or processes. He or it must be a first cause—a fountain of self-generating energy.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Vernon, “you mean that? Yes, of course I can see that.”

“Well,” said Glanville, “in imputing free will to the soul we are necessarily imputing to it a something which is a miniature or microcosmic duplicate of this self-generating energy of the Universe. In its own small way the soul must be a first cause also. It must be a thing that can push without requiring to be pushed.”

"Surely," said Mrs. Vernon, "this is merely what we all mean, isn't it?—what we were taught in the nursery—what we all understood as children."

"I'm glad to find," said Glanville, "that I've landed you on homely ground. A child is, in some respects, as good a philosopher as Kant. And now," he continued, "since we are all agreed, in a general common-sense sort of way, as to what the Theist means by the soul, the mind, or the religious essence of man, I'm going to ask Mr. Seaton to take the case in hand, and show how the theistic philosopher—for such Mr. Seaton is—makes this real or supposed immortal and self-willed entity the foundation of a religious system, so that before we consider what science has to say about the matter, we may grasp the main ideas with which it will come in conflict."

"I'm afraid," said Seaton, "I shall need some courage at starting, for I'm going to start with the confession that I actually agree with a bishop. The Bishop of Glastonbury is not, perhaps, a profound philosopher, but at dinner the other night, when he was describing the foundations of his own faith, he said what, in spite of Mr. Hancock, I regard as fundamentally true. Admitting that the theistic man, if such a being exists, must possess those two qualities which Mr. Glanville has just dwelt upon, he declared that man's possession of them is a fact absolutely indubitable, that we know it no less directly than we know our own existence. Logically, he said, no doubt, our knowledge of our existence comes first."

"With that view," said Mr. Hancock drily, "we are not likely to quarrel."

"He reminded us," continued Seaton, "that the

commonest philosophic expression of this certainty consists of the formula, '*I think: therefore I am*'; but we may, he added, say with equal truth, '*I will: therefore I am*'; and '*I ought: therefore I am.*' Mr. Glanville left out this last point. He will not quarrel with me for introducing it. Well, agreeing with the Bishop of Glastonbury here, I agree not with him alone, but with Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and all true philosophers. We all start with an *Ego* which immediately cognises itself under the three aspects of reason, freedom, and duty. Do I frighten anybody by using these awful words?"

"No," said Lady Snowdon; "I think we can pick up what you mean."

"It's a little difficult," said Seaton, with charming modesty, "to boil down the whole system of true philosophy into a sentence or two; but, after all, philosophy is practically valuable—I agree here with Plato rather than with the modern Germans—only in so far as it results in certain final conclusions, which the ordinary intellect can understand, and carry, as it were, in its waistcoat pocket; so I will keep, as far as I can, to general arguments and conclusions, which are capable of being stated, if not proved, in very, very simple language, and, indeed, are little more than what the Bishop put to us at dinner. If we know—and we do know as a truth directly apprehended by us—that our wills are free, and that, being free, they are uncaused or first causes—for Mr. Glanville is right as to that—and if similarly we know farther that with these free wills is associated the obligation of moral duty, we know at the same time that the *Ego* is essentially independent of the mere physical organism; and we infer with a directness which almost amounts to an intuition that the

first cause of all things is a Being no less moral than we are. This is the bare outline of the great philosophic argument; and thus, from the mere study of the human mind itself, we get not only the theistic man, but the theistic God also. You will no doubt say that this is a very simple bit of reasoning to be the outcome of such stupendous labour on the part of so many philosophers. But the true task of philosophy is not so much to discover recondite truths as to prove simple truths, or to clear away difficulties by which simple truths are obscured. Here comes in the laborious part of the business. It's like the boring of a tunnel through the Alps, so that ordinary travellers can make the journey easily."

"A capital illustration," said Mr. Hancock, "if only I were sure of what it illustrated. The precise difficulties which philosophy has to clear away—the Alps which it has to tunnel, so that the mind may travel easily to the goal of a happy Theism—what are they? Can Mr. Seaton tell us?"

"Yes," said Seaton, "I can. They consist wholly and solely of what we call the external Universe, or the order of facts to which modern science confines itself."

"If philosophy," said Mr. Hancock, "can clear away the Universe, it is superior even to faith, which is satisfied with removing mountains."

"Let us," resumed Seaton, "make just one supposition. Let us suppose that this Universe which science studies were annihilated, and that nothing remained but God, or the Supreme Mind, on the one hand, and the human mind, with its attributes of reason, freedom, and moral sense, on the other. In that case all the difficulties which science raises would disappear. We should have no tortuous processes of

physical evolution, no spectacle of mechanical necessity, to discompose us or conflict with our natural inference that the Supreme Mind is good and accessible. But the mischief is that the Universe seems to come in the way, and our own minds seem to be stuck in it, like flies in a plate of treacle. That's the vulgar, that's the scientific idea; and under the influence of this idea the human mind argues that the treacle which clogs it, and takes its freedom away from it, when it struggles to reach the goodness which it naturally imputes to the Supreme Mind, is an obstacle put in its way by the Supreme Mind itself. Hence it argues farther that its original and instinctive inference with regard to the goodness of the Supreme Mind must be false—that freedom and goodness are phantoms of our own engendering, and that nothing exists outside ourselves to correspond with them."

"Yes," said Mr. Hancock, "that seems correct. But it's a big thing, Mr. Seaton—this Universe, this plate of treacle of yours; and we shall, I repeat, be glad to hear how your philosophy gets rid of it."

"Philosophy—the true philosophy," said Seaton very gravely, "gets rid of it in a simple and absolutely effectual way—by showing that it has no existence."

Mrs. Vernon gasped. "What, Mr. Seaton," she exclaimed, "do you mean that it's all a dream—that the stars are dreams—that the sea is a dream—and that you were drinking dream-whiskey just now out of a dream-tumbler? If that's the case, I wish you would tell me this—how do we each of us get into the dreams of other people?"

Lord Restormel leaned towards Miss Leighton.

"If he'd teach me," he murmured, "how I might get into yours, I'd become an Hegelian to-morrow."

"I told you," said Seaton, "that all the difficulties of philosophy lay not in its conclusions, but in its proofs. I can't attempt, of course, to give you its proofs in detail; but I can, I think, make one fundamental point clear to you, which will help you to see what the nature of its proofs is. That philosophy gets rid of the material Universe seems to many people a hard saying. It seems so in consequence of a single rudimentary misconception. I ought to be able to remove this in a minute or two; and then you will see the regions in which philosophy works. Come now, Mrs. Vernon, you think we can't get rid of the Universe because the Universe is made of matter. Isn't that so? To get rid of the Universe by any process of thought seems to you as impossible as to think yourself through a mahogany door. But just ask yourself for a moment what your conception of matter is—the matter of the Universe in general, or of this marble balustrade, or of this lemon, which is lying amongst the tumblers."

"Well," said Mrs. Vernon, "to take a small thing like this lemon—what is it I do mean when I say that this lemon is matter? I mean that it is something which is quite independent of myself. It's here. I go away. I come back again, and it's here still; and I naturally conclude that it's been here all the time."

"Yes," said Seaton, "but what are its other qualities?"

Mrs. Vernon pondered. "To begin with," she said, "it's solid. It's not a mere oval appearance. If I drop it on the ground, it gives a little satisfactory thud. Then it's yellow; and it has

a nice acid taste of its own ; and all these things belong to *it*. They don't belong to *me*, as they would do in a dream ; and that's what makes a real lemon not a vision, but matter. There's the best account I can give you on the spur of the moment."

"And a quite good enough account, too," said Seaton approvingly. "Come, then, let us take your material lemon's qualities and consider them one by one. Let us begin with its colour. You say that its material skin has the material quality of yellowness. But you only mean that, when you look at it, a sensation which you call yellowness is produced in you through your own eyes. Show your lemon to a person who is colour-blind, and the sensation produced in him will be different. To him the lemon may seem red, or green, or blue, or any colour you please. The colour, therefore, is not in the lemon itself. The colour is in your friend and you, and differs according to the manner in which your sight differs from his. Then take the lemon's taste. Let a very slight change be made in your nervous system, and the taste of the lemon would be changed for you beyond all recognition. What you call its taste, therefore, like its colour, is not in the lemon, but in yourself. And now for the noise which it makes when it falls down on the ground—the satisfactory thud, which showed you that it is solid and substantial. Suppose that you and the whole human race were deaf. What would become of your lemon's satisfactory thud then? In that case, not only would lemons fall to the ground silently, but the sea in its wildest storms would be like so much undulating muslin, and planets might collide and destroy each other like a couple of meeting snowflakes. As one by one you dispossess your-

self of your senses, so by corresponding steps do you unbuild and annihilate the thing which you call matter; and all the movements and processes of the whole material Universe are reduced to a masque of shadows."

"I can follow all this," said Miss Leighton, "up to a certain point; but look here, Mr. Seaton, I've one thing—no, two things—no, I think three things, to put to you. Will you be a patient sage, and listen to me? It seems to me that though matter did become a masque of shadows, still the shadows would be solid. They'd be made up of something all through. This stone balustrade, for instance; it's not only stone outside, but it's stone inside also. And then it's not only solid, but it's heavy. If it fell on a bit of glass, the bit of glass would be broken, whether you or I were present to see the breakage and hear the noise; or no. These are two of my points; and my third is this. Give us our senses, you say, and the Universe springs into being, like a letter waiting to be read by us as soon as our eyes are open. Well, both for you and me the letter is the same letter; and we certainly neither of us wrote it, for its contents are often a surprise to us. It must, therefore, surely, exist apart from ourselves, though we only know it as a letter from the way in which it affects our eyes. Now, will you be good enough to take my points as I put them to you?"

"I think," said Seaton, "it will be best if I take them in the inverse order. I'll begin with your last. That something exists which is not ourselves I grant you. All I am saying is, that, apart from ourselves, it does not exist as matter; for matter is merely the conception which we ourselves form of

it. I don't know if you read Dickens. In one of his books there's a piece of unconscious philosophy. He is speaking of a sitting-room called 'Cosy,' in an old-fashioned public-house. When one of the servants at night lit the gas in it, 'Cosy,' he says, 'seemed to leap out of a dark sleep.' That's what the Universe does, when a human being confronts it. It becomes matter only in the act of being thought of as matter; but there's something there, no doubt, ready for thought to act upon."

"Well," said Miss Leighton, "it's comfortable to know even that. And I suppose you'll admit that the different parts of this something would go on affecting each other, even if they hadn't the privilege of affecting you and me by the way?"

"Yes," said Seaton, "the unwatched pot would boil just as punctually as the watched pot. What we call material things would continue to affect each other; but, Miss Leighton, let me repeat once more, that, apart from our own conception of them, the things would not be material. You understand already that, apart from our conception of them, they would lose most of their material qualities, for example, the quality of colour; but you still think they would keep one—that they would be at all events solid—that stone balustrades, as you put it, would still be stone all through. But is this so? I can soon show you it is not. One reason why you think a balustrade solid is that if you strike it, it stops your hand. You feel its abrupt resistance. Suppose, however, that your sense of touch were taken from you, your hand would still be stopped; but so far as this particular experience went, the balustrade might be merely a white surface, by contact with which your muscles were somehow para-

lysed. Wait a moment, Miss Leighton. You'll tell me we can cut it open, with a saw or chisel, and see that its inside is just the same as its outside, in other words, that it is solid, and not a mere shell or surface."

"Yes," said Miss Leighton. "I should tell you that, most certainly."

"Well," said Seaton, "let me ask you to consider this. In however many places you sawed your balustrade in two, you would merely be laying bare a succession of new surfaces. Grind your balustrade to powder, and you multiply the same process. The *throughness* or the *insideness* of each minutest grain will be just as inaccessible to you as the *insideness* of the whole block."

"To be sure," said Lady Snowdon. "I remember that when I was quite a child John Stuart Mill would explain the whole thing to me, by describing matter as merely the permanent possibility of sensation."

"So far as he went," said Seaton, "though that was not far, Mill was perfectly right; and now, if you are not all tired of me, I am going a step farther. You see by this time that our ordinary conception of matter depends on our senses, and would also change if our senses changed. But suppose that whilst keeping our senses, we lost our mental consciousness. What would happen then? The senses would be like postmen bringing letters to a deserted house. The letters would mean nothing for anybody. They acquire a meaning only when the mind reads them. In other words, what we mean by matter is an idea fashioned by the human mind out of impressions which are made on it through the senses by a something which is not itself. And here, Miss Leighton, we return once more to one

of the three points mentioned by you. What is this mysterious something, the insideness of which seems always to elude us? A lemon or a balustrade exists for us, in the character of a material object, only when we are there to perceive it. What becomes of it when we go away? For, as you rightly observe, it is waiting for us when we come back again. Well, true philosophy—the one key to existence—shows us, from a study of the human mind itself, that just as such things exist for us, whenever and for so long as we are ourselves in a position to perceive them, so do they permanently exist, and possess an exteriority or *Ausserlichkeit*, because they are always objects in the all-embracing mind of God. Thus everything that is reduces itself to two living factors—the human mind and the divine mind; and the Universe, as we know it, is a kind of duet between the two.”

“Ah, Mr. Seaton,” exclaimed Mr. Hancock, “you’re getting too deep for us now. That our ordinary idea of matter is a mere mental convention, we all of us freely grant you. That’s the asses’ bridge of philosophy. As Mr. Brock says, the essence of things is unknowable.”

“Pardon me,” said Seaton, “but it’s precisely this essence of things that a true philosophy reveals to us with absolute clearness. The essence of things is simply the divine mind, as apprehended by the human mind which is kindred to it. The moment we realise this, matter becomes diaphanous; everywhere we see the divine mind through it; and our own moral nature, which philosophy thus sets free, finds in the Universe not a clog or an obstacle, but a medium through which it unites itself to the supreme Goodness or Wisdom. I’m surprised, Mr.

Hancock, that you should call this reasoning deep. My slight sketch of the position which the true philosophy secures for us is simplicity itself when compared with the profound arguments by which the position has been won, and is still, on occasion, vindicated."

"In that case," said Mr. Hancock, "we must be most of us in a very bad way, Mr. Seaton; for the philosophic gate to heaven is straiter than even the Christian."

"Indeed," said Seaton, "you are in error. Hegel certainly said that only two men could understand him. One was himself, and the other man understood him wrongly. But what the philosopher finds out with labour, the world can accept with ease. The world has no more need to understand all the details of philosophy than the philosopher has to understand any of the details of science."

"That," said Mr. Hancock, "is at all events lucky for the philosopher; for I don't think, Mr. Seaton, that your method of philosophising is likely to lead to many scientific discoveries."

"No," replied Seaton, "nor do we desire to make them. It is enough for us to know the nature of matter in general, and to realise that it is merely the medium by which mind communicates with mind—the individual mind with the absolute. If you want to send and receive a message by telegraph, the vital thing for you is the contents of the two messages, not the precise means by which the wire transmits them."

"Well, Mr. Seaton," said Mr. Hancock, "the earlier part of your exposition was a very luminous statement of a truth which we all admit. You took us over the asses' bridge capitally; but when you

propose, having got to the other side of it, to ascend into heaven, by some means unintelligible to anyone but yourself and Hegel, you place us in a sad difficulty. We can't go over the whole of Hegel's works to-night. If we did, we shouldn't understand them ; so as none of your most important arguments are capable of being produced in court, you have brought us into a kind of *cul-de-sac* ; for I don't see how we can discuss your position in any way."

Most of those present were of Mr. Hancock's opinion. It proved, however, to be not shared by their host.

"My dear Hancock," he said, "I assure you your alarm is superfluous. Mr. Seaton has told us everything that a critic of his position need require."

"I wish," said Mr. Hancock, "you'd be good enough to show us how."

CHAPTER III

“NO doubt,” said Glanville, “it would be presumption on the part of any of us to think that we could understand the arguments on which Mr. Seaton sets most store, and which he has consequently withheld. I will not therefore insist that even if we were to take on trust his doctrine that the Universe is, as he says, a duet, with ideas for notes, performed by him and the Absolute, the performance would hardly be one which the Theist would call religious. That point, Alistair, I propose to waive altogether. I’ll leave your building to take care of itself. I’ll consider your foundations only; and I hope to show you how the science of whose details you think so little washes away the foundations on which not you alone, but all our transcendental philosophers, build and have built their systems—washes them away altogether, as if they were so much sand. Let us, however, before we begin to quarrel, shake hands over certain points with regard to which we agree. In one sense we are all idealists; and if any of us weren’t half an hour ago, you have converted them to the faith by your own admirable exposition of it. We all agree that we can know nothing of the *insideness* of the thing called matter; but we still admit, as you do, that there is something external which corresponds to it, and that quite apart from any relation to ourselves, this something

behaves in a certain uniform manner. The unwatched pot, as you put it, boils no less than the watched pot. Thus far we agree. Now we approach our difference. The boiling of the pot is, according to you, something that takes place in the absolute mind of God ; but however that may be, your essential point is this—that the boiling of the pot affects the mind of man only as a telegraph wire—to use your own illustration—we have to jump about from one illustration to another—affects the recipient of some telegraphic message. It reveals to the mind of man certain workings of the mind of God ; but the mind of man is a thing independent of the wire, and—to use another of your expressions—it is antecedent to the message.”

“Naturally,” said Seaton, with a touch of impatience, “naturally.”

“Here, then,” said Glanville, “is the philosophic view. The philosopher gives us two full-blown minds to start with, and the Universe of matter—the wire that has been hung up between them—is for the philosopher useful, because it transmits messages ; but its details are otherwise of no very great concern to him. Now, my dear Alistair, we come to the view of science. Science turns your view altogether topsy-turvy, by showing that the wire—the element which for you comes last—is in reality the element which comes first, and that it not only transmits messages to the human mind, but is itself the antecedent creator of the very mind that receives them. Hence the thing whose details your philosophy will hardly glance at is the first thing on which it is necessary for us to concentrate our whole attention. You all see the difference between the two positions. Mr. Seaton takes the individual

mind as his starting-point—an ultimate, complete, self-existing unit of fact—a sort of Melchizedek, without father or mother, without descent. Science exhibits it to us as a highly complex product, having behind it a long pedigree of causes ; and maintains that before we can explain the Universe through the individual mind, we must set ourselves to explain the individual mind through the Universe.”

“This is merely,” said Seaton contemptuously, “the old idea of Lucretius, who looked on the mind or soul as a sort of secretion of the body. Modern science offers us no new conclusions. It only harks back to one of the crudest guesses of antiquity.”

“In the same way,” said Glanville, “your famous friend Hegel merely harked back to the guesses of early guessers like Heraclitus.”

“Yes,” said Seaton, “but between Hegel and Heraclitus there’s one great difference. What Heraclitus threw out as a guess, Hegel gives us as the result of an elaborate intellectual system. He didn’t merely state his conclusions. He showed the how and the why of them. The guess is in this way transfigured, and becomes quite another thing.”

“You are right,” said Glanville, “and the crude guess of Lucretius is transfigured by modern science in precisely the same way. Lucretius saw mind on one side of a river, and common matter, such as earth and stones, on the other. He connected them by a visionary and unstable bridge of what might be, which no inquirer could walk across. Modern science has connected them by a solid bridge of what is—a bridge which every day is being strengthened by engineers and masons, and over which even now we can all go in an omnibus.”

“Do you mean,” said Miss Leighton, “that,

according to modern science, our minds and thoughts are made of the same stuff as paving-stones? The two seem to me to have nothing at all in common."

"So," said Glanville, "do they seem to our friend Mr. Seaton, when Mr. Seaton is in a certain mood. I knew from the very tone of voice in which he just now spoke that he was pouring private contempt on the idea that the stones in the streets of Jena, which the great Professor Hegel trod upon, were only hindered by circumstances from becoming professors themselves. But our friend, when he is in this mood, is a victim to that very superstition from which he himself has been at such pains to deliver us—I mean our conventional belief with regard to the nature of matter. He showed us, as you remember, that the brute stolid solidity which we impute to paving-stones, and which seems to us the essence of matter, is a mere idea—a quality purely mental. His point, in fact, was that matter is a secretion of mind. There we all agree with him. Well, if it be true that matter is a secretion of mind, there can, to say the least of it, be nothing absurd in the idea that mind is a secretion, or a certain mode, of matter. I don't say that this second proposition logically follows from the first. It doesn't. I only say that if the first proposition be true, there can in the second be no inherent absurdity. It *may* be true. Whether it *is* true is a separate question; and this, my dear Alistair, is the question to which modern science, by methods and with results beyond the dreams of Hegel, has during the past fifty years been elaborating its infinitely complex but absolutely coherent answer. Science, you see, Mrs. Vernon, like philosophy and like religion,

has for us but one speculative end, namely, to show us the connection between ourselves—our individual minds—and the sum of things outside ourselves.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Vernon, “that’s all very well in theory. But do you seriously mean to tell me that men of science to-day believe that they can, as you and Stephanie put it, construct a bridge of fact between paving-stones and the human soul? I used to know Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall well; and I’ve over and over again heard both of them say two things—that we never can know how consciousness comes to be connected with the brain, and that no one has ever discovered the faintest indication of life rising out of matter that was not alive before. So I myself (though I speak with all humility) should have thought that the result of science, though possibly not its aim, was not to answer the great question you speak of, but merely to show us its own incapacity for answering it. It guides us up to a locked door, and leaves us there.”

“No, no, Mrs. Vernon,” said Mr. Hancock; “that would be very shabby conduct. It surely introduces us to some radiant theistic angel, and says, ‘This gentleman will show you over our other department.’”

“As to how the brain,” said Glanville, ignoring this observation, “comes to be conscious, when other matter is not—there, no doubt, is a problem in itself insoluble; but the question is not how a thing happens, but whether it happens. A cook could not tell us how steam rises from boiling water; but the cook knows that it does rise. In a certain sense of the word, we don’t know the *how* of anything. As to the division between living matter and lifeless—to that I will come back in a minute or two. Let me tell my

story in my own way; and let us start from ourselves as we are—from the thinking human animal. Well, as we all know, and as I was saying the other day to Mr. Seaton, the species man was, till fifty years ago, generally regarded as an isolated phenomenon in nature, not only in respect of his mind, but in respect of his body also. Then came Darwin. What he did we know. He threw a bridge of fact across an enormous chasm, previously spanned only by daring but vague conjecture; and by this bridge he and his successors have connected the sacred human organism, not only with the organism of the monkey and the dog and the fish, but with the simple cell—the lowest of organic things—and, through the cell, with the vegetable world also.”

“Do you mean,” said Mrs. Vernon, “that we are now asked to regard ourselves, not only as the children of monkeys, but as the grandchildren of beans and potatoes?”

“No,” said Glanville. “We let you down very gently. The potatoes are your Scotch cousins. But the fact that, physically at least, they are your own blood relations, is, by this time, as well established as the earth’s movement round the sun. An odd illustration of this was given the other day by a writer in a Roman Catholic review, who was urging that God’s control over matter was proved by the fact that every form of life—animal and vegetable alike—is traceable back to the cells I have just been speaking of, and there abruptly ends; the organic world being thus a sort of second Universe added to the first by a new creative act. Think what a revolution in thought has been accomplished in fifty years—since the day when Bishop Wilberforce, amid shouts of clerical applause, declared that the very

idea of the natural connection of species was a flimsy speculation, inspired by the inhalation of a mephitic gas. We may call this discovery of the unity of the organic world, at which the theologians of yesterday alternately howled and giggled, and on which to-day they are trying to build cathedrals, the first of those new and enormous concrete blocks on which science supports its bridge between the Universe and the human mind. Taken by itself, however, it was not a bridge, but a pier, which the theologians were still able to use for their own purposes. The general position in which they took refuge was, that though man's body was a product of the general organic process, it was, as they put it, the mere envelope of his immortal soul, and they sought to establish this position by the two following arguments. One was the argument which Mrs. Vernon just now alluded to—that consciousness is in its essence something distinct from matter, and that man, therefore, must have a spiritual in addition to his physical nature. The other was derived from the philosophy of Mr. Seaton or the Bishop of Glastonbury, according to which the contents, as distinct from the mere fact of consciousness, show the soul to be a moral and self-determining entity. The first of these arguments has been put by a modern theologian thus. Matter is extended or spatial. Consciousness, thought, and feeling are non-extended, or non-spatial; and to endow an extended substance with these non-extended attributes is 'a metaphysical impossibility beyond the power of God.' As to this argument I'll content myself, for the moment, with reminding you of something which even our theologians are at last coming to realise. I mean that if it is valid as applied to man, it is

equally valid as applied to all other living things. If a man must be capable of surviving his spatial body because he is capable of feeling non-spatial pain, so must a dog or a cat be ; so must an ant or flea ; and a mediæval saint might meet his own vermin in heaven. But before I say anything more about this, let us look at argument number two."

"If," said Mr. Hancock, "fleas and curs are immortal, let us only hope devoutly that human beings are not."

"There are a great many dogs," said Lady Snowdon, "that I'd much sooner meet in heaven than certain be-diamonded ladies whom I sometimes come across in London. And now, Mr. Glanville, what are we to have next?"

"Wait a bit," interposed Mr. Hancock ; "let me put in a word here. Before Mr. Glanville moves on to a new point, let us see precisely the point we have reached already. The human body, and the bodies of the animals, are admitted to have the same bodily origin ; but theologians, granting this, seek to prove that man has a soul, of which his body is merely the envelope, by arguing that consciousness is essentially a non-physical thing. To this argument Mr. Glanville has given the provisional answer that it proves too much. If it proves that man has a soul, it proves that bugs have souls also. To this argument from the nature of consciousness he is going to come back again, and I anticipate that he is going to treat it in a much more searching way. But he is going to deal with another argument first, used by theologians also, which is not drawn from the nature of consciousness generally, but from certain specific contents of the consciousness of the human being. These are the voice of conscience, our sense of

moral freedom, and our knowledge that we are mental units. It is on these, you will remember, that Mr. Seaton's argument founds itself."

"Yes," said Glanville, "Mr. Seaton's argument, and our Bishop's argument, and what was the argument of half the world till a very few years ago. But before we dissect it I will put it a little more fully than Mr. Seaton did. According to him our three primary certainties are our existence as mental units; our power of self-causation; and the spiritual authority of conscience. But to these contents of the mind Mr. Seaton would add also, though he had just now no occasion to do so, our intellectual certainties with regard to the truths of mathematics. Now according to Mr. Seaton's school the peculiarity of these last is that we cannot, for several reasons, have acquired them by our own experience; and I admit myself, quite as fully as he does, that these ideas, and others, in a certain sense are innate. Yes, Alistair, but science, in admitting this fact, invests it with a meaning very different from that of your friends and you. Let me illustrate this meaning by a case which gives you a parallel to it—one case out of a thousand. It is that of an officer—a notoriously brave man—who was terrified by one thing only—merely the sight of an injured finger-nail. This invariably overcame him and sometimes nearly made him faint. Why he should be thus affected was to him a complete mystery. It appeared, however, that his mother's hand, though he himself never knew it, had some months before his birth been jammed by a closing door, and her feelings on that occasion had been reproduced in her son. We here see how one generation can transmit its experiences to another; and in just the same way those other innate ideas—

ideas of space, time, the necessity of mathematical truths, and so on—which we once supposed to be ours as a heritage from some other world, and are certainly ours independently of our own private experiences, are now shown to have been derived from the experiences of our terrestrial ancestors, and to be, as it were, the mental precipitate of all antecedent life. I need not inflict any more of this exposition on you, for the fact of heredity itself, and its general effects on character, are so familiar to you all that they formed the other day our chief topic at dinner. I'll merely go on to apply a principle now familiar, to another of these innate possessions of your minds and of mine, which forms, for Mr. Seaton, one of the pillars of his religious edifice. I mean our innate sense of the difference between right and wrong—our consciousness of the moral imperative. He accepts conscience as a primary mental fact—as the direct gift—or, if you like it, the direct reflection—of a great moral power which has made, or which pervades, the Universe. Science assigns to it a widely different origin. Science exhibits conscience to us as the result of heredity also—as a stored-up lesson of the local experience of a species—the lesson, namely, that if men are to live in societies, the personal desires of each must be modified for the sake of all. Here, then, though Mr. Seaton won't admit it, the mysterious root or sucker by which, according to him, we draw our moral nutriment from a source beyond the stars, is dug up before our eyes by the homely spade of science, and is caught in the act of drawing it from the soil of this small planet. Do you see, Mrs. Vernon, the point we have reached now? We have got man's body as the outcome of the single cell;

we have got man's conscience as a product of social experience ; and his other innate ideas are accounted for in a kindred way. But we still have to consider what Mr. Seaton describes as man's knowledge of his own freedom, or self-causality, and his knowledge of his own existence as a simple mental unit ; and we have also to come back again, as Mr. Hancock just now observed, to the bare fact of his consciousness. All these three facts, no doubt, suggest the belief that his actual self may be independent of his bodily organism, even though we admit that his conscience and his innate ideas are due, as we have just seen, to the experiences of his terrestrial ancestors, and though consciousness may suggest an animal as well as a human immortality. Now with which of these three facts will it be best for us to deal first ?

"I think," said Lady Snowden, "it will be best for us to go back to the bare fact of our consciousness. As Mrs. Vernon has said, even men like Huxley and Tyndall looked on consciousness as a kind of insoluble mystery, and at present you've only answered the arguments which have this mysteriousness for their basis by saying that if they prove the existence of a soul in man, they prove the existence of a soul in animals also. That's a damaging retort, but it's not a complete refutation. I've heard of many modern mystical writers who accept the immortality of animals with the best grace in the world."

"Let us," said Glanville, "follow Lady Snowden's advice. I'm glad that she too, like Mrs. Vernon, has called our attention to Tyndall's and Huxley's mysticism ; for I wish to remind you myself of two other facts connected with it. Though both these distinguished men made solemn and elaborate protestations that the alliance of consciousness with the

brain was peculiar and beyond our comprehension, they both of them expressed their belief that, however it came about, the brain, as the organ of consciousness, merely exhibited in concentration some quality of matter in general, which existed elsewhere in diffusion. I wish to remind you also that Huxley towards the end of his life prophesied that science would win its next important victory in connection with this very subject—the nature of thought and consciousness. He was not deceived. Facts have been brought to light since Professor Huxley's death which have caused a revolution in our whole conception of mind. One of them is the fact that mental life, in all its various and even its most elaborate forms, can exist apart from consciousness just as completely as in connection with it."

"I confess," said Mrs. Vernon, "I don't see how that can be. If I'm not conscious myself that I've had certain thoughts or feelings, how can anyone else know anything about the matter at all? If I'm not conscious that I remember that I've got to dine out next Friday, surely that is the same thing as forgetting it."

"Yes," said Glanville, "but suppose you've forgotten it till Friday night arrives, and that then your engagement suddenly comes back to you. That sort of thing is such a common occurrence that we none of us till lately have thought of what it really means. It means that your memory has been all the while guarding unconsciously a fact which at last it gives back to your consciousness. But we're now able to realise much stranger things than this. If somebody asks you to dinner, your memory when it takes charge of the invitation knows what it is doing. But consider the well-known case of girls,

brought up in innocence, who utter, in the ravings of fever, the foulest language of the streets. What is the explanation of this? There is one explanation only—that they have heard such language unconsciously, that their memory has unconsciously received it, and unconsciously long afterwards gives it up to their lips. But the full significance even of this singular fact would possibly never have dawned on us if it had not been that the psychology of hypnotism had shown us a whole world, a whole system, of similar facts. Half of any new discovery is generally made up not of a perception of facts which we had not known before, but of a new perception of the meaning of facts which had been always familiar: and the facts of hypnotism have been a rallying-point for a mass of previous knowledge, the details of which had meant nothing to us, because they were scattered and unconnected. Now, when they are connected, they cohere into a new revelation. We are now able to assure ourselves by reiterated experimental proof of a truth which our parents—which Hegel, and probably even Huxley—would have looked on as a contradiction in terms. We see feeling, memory, hope, fear, imagination, and the most elaborate reasoning, going on as cerebral processes of which consciousness forms no part.”

“Let me,” said Lord Restormel, “remind you of what the Bishop of Glastonbury said about judgment at our celebrated philosophic dinner-party—that dinner-party at which, as it seems to me, nearly every question was raised which we’ve set ourselves to thresh out since. He said that our judgments were formed *for* us, rather than formed *by* us. He said they were the results of a certain mental process too quick and too complicated for our per-

sonal consciousness to follow. There, in the light of what Mr. Glanville has just said, we've another example of the activity of unconscious reason—and a very good one—the better the more we think of it.”

“You see, Mrs. Vernon,” said Glanville, “though no one has witnessed the process, we know that thinking has been done, because we get the thoughts at the end of it; and now that we realise this mental activity of the unconscious, conscious mind, which we once regarded as the only mind, appears to us no longer as an isolated and disconnected fact, but as a little delicate flower sprouting from an enormous bulb—from something which was never till lately recognised as mind at all.”

“It's amazing—all this,” said Mr. Hancock, “positively amazing. I said to my old friend Charcot, when last I saw him in Paris, ‘Charcot,’ I said, ‘this discovery of unconscious mind is a greater addition to our knowledge than the discoveries of Newton and Darwin. It seems to me as if you and your fellow-workers had taken up the floor of our minds, as we might take up the floor of a stage, and shown us the machinery which raises the scenes or lowers them, and all the properties, and dresses, and books of words, lying stored and ready for use in so many unroofed cellars.”

“We might,” resumed Glanville, “if only we had the time, occupy hours and days in illustrating what Mr. Hancock says. But now, having pointed out what the nature of this discovery is, all that we can, and all that we need do here, is to realise its general meaning. It means that between the matter which is known to us as associated with consciousness and other matter which is not so known, the interspace, once supposed to be a bottomless and

impassable gulf, is filled up by matter which, though not associated with consciousness, is associated, nevertheless, with memory, feeling, reason—with every other faculty proper to developed mind, and that consciousness rises out of this, and constantly sinks back into it, by a change as unbroken and gradual as any other change in nature.”

“In a general way,” said Lady Snowdon, “we most of us know something of all this. But, Mr. Glanville, you must remember that your bridge is only half finished. You’ve shown that the world of organisms from the plant-cell up to the man comprises the life of the mind as well as that of the body; but though you have thus identified mind with living matter, you haven’t identified living matter with dead. If Mr. Seaton will lend me one of his elegant similes, you have thus far given us living and thinking matter like so much treacle lying in an earthenware saucer. We’ll suppose that life and thought are really a form of treacle. Can you show us that the treacle is in its turn a form of earthenware?”

“We’ve come back again,” said Glanville, “to Miss Leighton’s original difficulty—how can living mind be developed out of a dead paving-stone? Well, as I’ve pointed out already, Mr. Seaton himself has shown us, by a piece of mental analysis, that the deadness of paving-stones is simply an idea of our own. Let us now turn to science. It will teach us the same lesson in different terms, and in a much more stimulating way. Instead of merely showing us that paving-stones or earthenware saucers are not dead, it shows us what they consist of, and are what they are by reason of, countless particles in a state of intricate and constant move-

ment. Do you see the blade of this penknife? We may say of it, in Wordsworth's language—

“ ‘Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man
Than the mute agents stirring there.’ ”

Thus, if your treacle represents our mental and organic activities, your earthenware saucer that holds them is itself equally active. That its atoms are active to some degree is a fact that has been long known: but the extent of their activity is a fact which has only just dawned on us. We saw their movements yesterday like a crowd's movements seen from a balloon. We see them now as though they were pedestrians, jostling us on the pavement of the Strand. The only question is, does this traffic and movement which we now see to prevail throughout the whole world of matter differ in kind from the movement which seemed till very lately to make its first appearance in the simplest organic cell? Huxley, though he believed them to be identical, could not detect their identity.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Vernon, “he has told me so very often.”

“And no doubt,” said Glanville, “he very often told you also that chemistry, which simplified matter up to a certain point, ended in giving us some sixty or seventy elements which defied farther analysis and refused to part with their differences. Huxley believed that at bottom they are really the same substance; but he admitted that this belief was supported by no experience. Its sole support was analogy. No one of the elements was ever changeable into another. Here, so far as proof went, was a missing link in his system. Since Huxley's death the missing link has been found. One of these ele-

ments, radium, has been actually detected changing itself into another element, helium. The Unspeakable, as Goethe says, has now grown to fulfilment."

"Then felt I," murmured Lord Restormel to himself, who seemed, for a wonder, by this time to have forgotten Miss Leighton—

"Then felt I as some watcher of the skies
When some new planet swims into his ken."

"And this is not all," said Glanville. "The change of one of these intractable elements into another does indeed foreshadow the change of lifeless matter into living. But recent discoveries have given us something more than mere foreshadowings. Helium is made up of atoms; radium is made up of atoms; all matter is made up of atoms likewise. Atoms till lately were looked on as ultimate particles. Now they too have opened to the touch of science, and are yielding their secrets up. *Solvat sæculum in favillâ*. They are showing us the dust of which they too, like all other things, are made. To think of all this makes us feel as Lucretius felt, what is half a horror and half a divine rapture. Here, however, is a subject about which, as I'm not a specialist, I will not trust myself to speak in my own words. I'll strike another match—I believe I have still one left—and read to you what a cautious man of science has said about it. 'The atom,' he says, 'which till lately was looked on as a simple unit, is now known to be composed of elements called electrons; and we find them to be really in a state of perpetual change. Now one electron is separated, and now another takes its place. Thus the process of the actual change of the substance of the atom is continuous, whilst the atom itself as one individual retains its

properties, and so far remains the same. Is the atom, then, an elementary cell—a living thing? Our own view is,' he says, 'that the atom preserves its identity in the same manner that a cell does, and bears the same relation to the latter that this does to a living organism. The distinction, apparently insuperable, that the biologist holds to exist between living and so-called dead matter, should thus pass away as a false distinction, and all Nature appear a manifestation of life: this being the play of units of we know not what, save that it is what we call *electricity*.' Here, Alistair," Glanville continued, "to adopt your own comparison, here, indeed, we have a tunnelling of the Alps; and an actual incident in the actual tunnel-making is repeated. The boring of the rock is begun at both ends simultaneously; and so accurately is the work directed that the two sets of workmen can at last hear each other tapping through the stone which still divides them. Then this falls and crumbles, and the two armies meet. Have not our tunnellers in living and lifeless matter been gradually coming to hear each other through the dividing wall also—faintly first, and then each year more clearly, till for them, too, the wall crumbles, and the waters of the living and the lifeless at last meet and mix together in a single living sea?"

"Famously put!" cried Mr. Hancock, clapping his hands; "and I, for one, believe in these discoveries thoroughly. But may I be permitted to throw what will seem, though for a moment only, a teacup of cold water on this conclusion? Let us suppose, though I don't believe it, that these discoveries are not yet complete; and that our theistic friends will be able for some time longer to

claim that, so far as our certain knowledge goes, the organic world is divided from the inorganic still. What I want to point out is that they gain nothing by doing so, but rather intensify the difficulties of their own position. You see, it's this way. According to admissions which even they are obliged to make, the organic world in itself is a single fact at all events. The treacle is the same as the treacle, even if it's not the same as the saucer; and individual minds, and individual turnips, are so many treacle bubbles, which appear on the surface of the stuff, and then burst and are lost in it. I can't see how the theistic individual is a scrap better off theistically because he rots like an organic turnip, than he would be if he rusted away like a fragment of inorganic iron; and as for the theistic God, if we judge of His character from the organic world alone, His case is worse, not better, than it would be otherwise. I mean that if the Universe, taken as one big whole, can't supply us—and we've seen already that it can't—with any evidence of any moral intention, or goodness, on the part of the Power behind it towards the individual man, we shall certainly not find this evidence by splitting the Universe in two, and setting ourselves to look for it in the organic half only. On the contrary, we shall make, by doing this, its absence the more conspicuous. And why? Does anybody here," said Mr. Hancock, looking sharply round him, "fail to see the reason? Because it's precisely in this organic half that we find those evidences of blindness, imperfect skill, and disregard of the individual, not regard of him, which make the ascription of any theistic virtues to this living world as a whole, or the Power behind it, impossible. By trying to shelter ourselves in this

kind of organic pantheism—I think, Mr. Glanville, that's rather a happy phrase of mine—instead of getting rid of the Theist's difficulties, we concentrate them. We bring them all down on our heads, as if we'd pulled the string of a shower-bath."

"Precisely," said Glanville. "If our Theists would only realise this, they would save themselves and their opponents much needless discussion. If the reason, the consciousness, the conscience, and the ideas of man are merely the transitory results of a general vital process, what should we gain by contending, even if we could do so plausibly, that this general vital process which produces lice and leprosy is a separate process from that which produces suns and sapphires? We shall, therefore, be simplifying our argument, without introducing any element into it which the Theist would gain by excluding, if we assume that these two processes have been shown definitely to be the same. I suppose, Mrs. Vernon, if you discovered that you were the sister of a flea, your family pride would suffer no further shock if you discovered that you were sister to the *Aurora Borealis* also."

"No," said Mrs. Vernon, "I don't suppose it would. I think, on the contrary, I should feel rather more respectable."

CHAPTER IV

VERY well, then," said Glanville, "our bridge between man and the Universe is now so far complete that we know the inorganic atom to be the archetype of the organic cell; the single organic cell to be the ancestor of the human brain; and organic life which does not possess consciousness to possess the faculties of reason, feeling, and memory, and to be that out of which consciousness, under given conditions, rises. The Universal Substance—to speak roughly—is revealed to us under three conditions—that of so-called lifeless matter; living matter which is unconscious; and living matter which flowers out into consciousness. The first leads up to the second as milk leads up to cream. The second leads up to the third as cream leads up to butter. But we haven't come to the end of our business yet. We have connected a good deal of man with the general substance of the Universe; but two bits of him remain which we have not yet tried to deal with."

"I hope," said Mr. Hancock, "you all of you see this. We've overhauled all of our theistic possessions but two. We've overhauled consciousness, conscience, and innate ideas. We've only got freedom and our mental unity left. We're now going to see what science has to say about these."

"Let us remember," said Glanville, "what Mr.

Seaton says about them first. He says that we know ourselves to possess them by a direct act of intuition. If Mr. Seaton is right, and if man does really possess them, it is still conceivable that all his other possessions may be something which the Universe provides him with for his purely temporary use, in order to equip him for his part in terrestrial life ; and his essence may still be something distinct from the Universe altogether. It therefore remains for us now to take these two pearls of price and examine them ; and we will take man's freedom, or his alleged freedom, first. Here again, in a sense, I agree with Mr. Seaton completely. We believe ourselves to be free, because we feel ourselves to be free ; but what I shall try to make plain to you is that this feeling of freedom is shown by science, if science can show us anything, to be neither more nor less than an optical delusion of the mind. It resembles a feeling which we all of us have often experienced when watching from a stationary train another train next us start. We feel that the movement belongs to our own train, not to this one ; and we can escape from our illusion only by looking at something—the platform or a pillar of the station—which is not on wheels at all. In the case of our own wills science teaches us to proceed in very much the same way. It shows us precisely how the feeling that we are free originates ; and shows at the same time that the feeling has taken us in."

"May I," interrupted Seaton, "from my own point of view, say something before you go on, which perhaps will save you trouble? Anybody can see that apart from our feeling of freedom, which philosophy takes as its starting-point, it is not only easy to prove that all our actions are necessary, but

that it is quite impossible to prove anything else. It's the old story of motive and action. We can't act without motive; motive depends on desire; desire depends on the character which we brought with us into the world, together with the circumstances with which the world has surrounded us; and these two things push us and pull us from our first day to our last. We are like toy boats, with paddles that go by clockwork. We are put in a pond helpless, and are bound to go where the paddles and the water take us. That's all very well; but we get rid of our freedom, not because we've explained it away, but because we have left it out. If you'll pardon me for referring once more to our friend the Bishop of Glastonbury, he hit the right nail on the head when he said that in each of these boats there was really a living steersman—perhaps an inconvenient passenger, but one whom we can't get rid of. Under ordinary conditions he, within certain limits, can steer the boat in what direction he will. Therefore the boat is free; it ceases to be a clockwork toy. It only fails to be free when, under conditions that are not ordinary, it gets into currents so strong that the rudder becomes ineffectual. Then our boat, it is true, drifts—it is steered no longer; but the great fact remains that, except in such rare cases, its course is determined by steering, and not by drifting."

"I must thank you," said Glanville, "for having made in a few words an admission which most of your friends make in a great many. You say there is a steersman in your boat, not because it is necessary for explaining the boat's course to an observer, but because the boat has, or you have, what you yourself describe as an immediate cognition of his presence. But now I want you to tell me a little

more clearly than you have done what this cognition consists of."

"The cognition," said Seaton, "consists of three parts—or rather it seems to do so, for they really resolve themselves into one—and these may be expressed by saying, 'I choose,' 'I resist,' 'I endeavour.' We usually think of our freedom as revealed to us in the act of choice, but our mere feeling that we choose, though it suggests the truth, would in my judgment hardly be enough to prove it; for the effort involved in choice is very often so small. The Bishop of Glastonbury's illustration is for this reason not quite adequate. The action of a steersman doesn't suggest exertion enough. Our cognition of our freedom is essentially a knowledge that we are making an effort—that we are, as you expressed it yourself, pushing without being pushed; and our exercise of choice makes the fact of our pushing unmistakable only when our choice of one line of conduct involves our resisting with vehemence a desire to follow some other, as would be the case with a drunkard resisting the desire to drink. I should say, however, that in its clearest and deepest form the cognition of our freedom consists of an indefeasible certitude, when we are striving to follow out some line of conduct which we have chosen rather than when we are resisting the temptation to follow another, that the increased intensity of action originates in our own selves—that we are, in short, as you yourself put it, sources of self-generating energy."

"Precisely," said Glanville. "This is the very point to which I wished to bring you back. There is no other proof that we are free beyond the dictum of consciousness. The whole question, then, comes

to this, What is the dictum worth? I'll remind you first that the value which ordinary thought imputes to it depends on ways of thinking which had developed themselves before the dawn of science. And now let us take the case which you have yourself suggested—the case of a course of action which is chosen, not resisted, and which, having been chosen, is pursued with sustained ardour and resolution. I'll take once more the case of an habitual drunkard, whose inherited and morbid craving may, as you expressly admit, deprive the will of its efficacy as a free steersman, and reduce its possessor to a puppet of hereditary impulse. We've often referred to poor Lady Cicely Morland, whose mania is so well known that we don't wrong her by talking about it. Well, her husband has lately kept her, as much as he could, in Ireland; and, for her sake, not a drop of alcohol is allowed to be brought into the house. I dare say you know that she isn't a strong woman. A half-hour's walk generally knocks her up. And yet last spring that woman, in the worst of weather, eluded her husband in the cleverest way possible, and trudged nine miles across the Connemara mountains in order to buy whiskey, which she brought back and hid in her dress-cupboard. Her maid, who suspected her intention, tried to stop her, but Lady Cicely laughed at her, saying, 'I'm determined to go.' There you have all the signs of effort, struggle, energy—what Mr. Seaton calls the intensification of action—and yet he admits that the energy was in this case not self-generated, but that our friend was, on the contrary, its victim instead of its originator. What Mr. Seaton admits to be true in a case like this, science shows to be no less true in the case of action generally."

"I don't," said Mrs. Vernon, "see why that should follow. Why should what's true in one case be true in other cases which are different? That's surely a mere assumption. Where's your proof?"

"One proof," said Glanville, "is this. Lady Cicely, whom we admit to be urged to her nine-mile walk by a craving for which she is not responsible, tells her maid that she is positively determined to go. The consciousness of determination, resolve, vehement energy, is never stronger than it is in cases like hers: and thus the famous dictum that we are the authors of our own actions is admittedly false in the cases where it seems to be most conclusive. The moment we realise that we needn't believe it in these, we lose all ground for believing it in others."

"But surely," said Mrs. Vernon, "you're leaving something out. The normal person, even if he wanted a glass too much, would be able, as just now you seemed to admit yourself, to resist the want. To me it seems that what makes us feel our freedom is the struggles we make to resist doing, not those we make to do. So far as mere doing is concerned, if we simply are guided by our desires, I can fancy that our sense of will may be merely the kind of feeling which the water might have, if conscious, when it felt itself plunge down from the top of Niagara to the bottom. But then, the water has no tendency to do anything else."

"Not as it falls," said Glanville; "but think of the pools below. There you will find it in every kind of conflict; yet there is not a single movement of the leaping and meeting waves which does not owe its origin, just as much as the falls do, to the river by which the falls are fed. Only continue to the battling water the consciousness which you have given

to the falling, and you'll see that a sense of struggle is no proof of freedom. Of course," Glanville continued, "I might point out the moral of my pool by reminding you that some people have inherited weak, other people active, consciences ; some people weak, other people strong, desires ; and that all of these come from the Niagara of previous life : and I might inflict on you any number of other arguments also. But it will be enough if I sum up the matter in one single inclusive statement. Science shows us that our wills are not, and cannot be, free, because it shows us that there is nothing free in the Universe. Science is one long, unbroken, and ever-developing object-lesson in the great law of causation. Till very lately this law was so imperfectly grasped by most people that all kinds of exceptions to it were tacitly assumed even by the educated. The survival of this mood of mind with regard to external nature is still, as Mr. Brock observed, shown in the continued use of prayer either for rain or for the cessation of it, amongst people who would laugh at the idea of reducing their butchers' bills by praying that the weight of their meat might be doubled as soon as they had bought it. But just as science, all the world over, is rapidly making people realise that the weather at any moment depends on antecedent causes just as exactly and inevitably as does the position, at any moment, of any planet in the solar system, so, if not interfered with, it will make us all realise precisely the same thing with regard to the human will. Every thought, every feeling, every desire, every weighing of right and wrong, every unconscious impulse, every conscious act of resolve, which exists or takes place at any moment in the mind of one of ourselves, is as truly the precise, and

the only possible result of the things that have gone before it, and the laws that govern the Universe, as the present position of the moon is, whose beauty we are now enjoying, or the plunge of these waves, in each of which is the impulse of the whole Atlantic."

"Yes," said Mr. Hancock, "I take your meaning to be this: For practical purposes the final proof of a thing consists in a conquest which facts, by reiterated verification and example, at last make of the imagination. When that conquest is made we not only admit intellectually that such and such a thing is true, but we cease to be able to think anything else possible. I was thinking, do you know, just now while you were talking, that this idea of an odd little mannikin of a free self inside us, who controls and originates our movements, is exactly of a piece with the odd little mannikin of a spirit by whose free activity a savage explains everything—the growth of a particular tree or the flowing of a particular brook. In our worship of the fetish of free-will we were all of us till lately savages."

"I see Mr. Seaton," said Glanville, "looking such unutterable things at me, that I can't resist the temptation to make one final raid on him. I'm sure, Alistair, you're thinking that all our talk about determinism applies only to such arguments as can be clothed in the forms of matter. But it doesn't. The perception which science has forced on us of the unthinkable character of freedom penetrates into the heart of even the most abstract reasoning, and shows us that the most absolute of idealisms offers us no escape from it. Absolute idealism can certainly go no farther than making the material Universe a duet between two minds. But the Universe, you admit,

still retains its uniformity ; and one of the conditions of its uniformity must be a uniformity of these minds themselves. Now the uniformity of our own minds, whatever its origin may be, is certainly not due to any conscious act of our own. We did not consciously—therefore we did not freely—determine that the earth should move round the sun, for till two or three centuries ago we did not know that it did so. Our minds are mechanisms which we are no more able to alter than a watch is able to alter the arrangement of its own wheels ; and all that idealism can give us in exchange for an external necessity is a travelling and portable necessity which we carry with us in our own natures."

"May I," said Miss Leighton, "be bold enough to refer to Spinoza, if you won't think me very unfeminine for fancying I understand bits of him? He says that 'the order and connexion of our ideas is the order and connexion of things.' Spinoza means, I suppose, that our minds are like pats of butter, the Universe being the mould into which they are all pressed ; and this accounts for the fact that they work in the same manner. I suppose Mr. Glanville to mean that if it's the other way on—if our minds are the moulds and the Universe is the pat of butter, and if the Universe is the same for all of us, because the moulds are of one pattern, the pattern-maker, who was not ourselves, holds us as much in his grip as the Universe-maker would do were the state of things reversed."

"I wish," said Lord Restormel, "that our philosophers would run their minds into the mould of yours, though, if you encouraged them to do so, I should poison them all from jealousy."

"Well," said Mr. Hancock wearily, "I suppose

I may now announce that the question of freedom is settled. Science has taken the matter out of the hands of philosophy, and has shown us that in spite of philosophy freedom does not exist. Whatever the individual does, he does in virtue of conditions which come from outside himself, and of most of which he is generally not even aware. This is the reason why I told the Bishop that freedom can survive only in the form of a working hypothesis."

"I must," said Lady Snowdon, "before you go farther, be permitted to make a very humble comment of my own. What you say is, no doubt, all perfectly logical; but our convictions are generally less logical than our arguments; and your arguments, my dear Mr. Glanville, seem to take away so much that they irritate me into questioning their right to take away anything. To a poor common-place, prejudiced woman like myself they would be more convincing if only they were less complete. It seems to me that they not only take our wills away from us, our souls away from us, and our heaven away from us, but our very identity as well. Now, perhaps," said Lady Snowdon, "I've not a will of my own, though my poor dear father used always to maintain the contrary; and perhaps I am not so favoured as to be destined to sing psalms in heaven. Mr. Glanville may rob me of my will; he may rob me of my hundredth psalm, but I refuse to let him or anybody rob me of my own identity."

Glanville laughed. "And yet," he said, "that's exactly what science does—at least if we use identity in the common sense of the word. Lady Snowdon, we come here to our last point—to the last remaining possession of ours; and it, too, disappears, like the others, under the all-dissolving touch. You indeed

admit yourself that it is almost dissolved already. Its freedom is gone ; its self-dependence is gone ; but, so far as we have seen already, it still retains its unity. As Mr. Hancock said the other day at dinner, even this is dissolved by science like sugar in a cup of tea."

"Was that my phrase?" said Mr. Hancock modestly. "Yes, I believe it was. I said further that the unity of the *Ego*, which the Bishop of Glastonbury found so comforting—and Mr. Seaton also—is no more simple and indestructible than the unity of a flower or a steam-engine. It is merely—I think these were my words—the unity of a co-ordinated organism."

"Well," said Glanville, "you go on with the story. You'll put it better than I should."

"He must, then," said Lady Snowdon, "put things in shorter words for us. What does the unity of the co-ordinated organism mean?"

"It means," said Mr. Hancock, delighted to be the chief speaker, "something very fairly simple. It means just this—the co-operation of a number of parts in producing a result which, in some sense, is a single fact. For instance, the movement, or power to move, of a locomotive—what grand machines those new ones are on the Great Western Railway!—is a single fact in a very practical sense. The locomotive moves, stops, increases and slackens its speed, with as much unity as a man does ; but it is made up of a great number of parts ; and if we were to take it bit by bit to pieces, we should at first cripple its power, and at last destroy it. In other words, the engine, as a moving unit, is the sum and result of a multitude of parts co-ordinated. With a man's personality the case is just the same. All

the vital parts of his organism are co-ordinated parts of an engine whose functions achieve the unity which we call the conscious self, because they minister and lead up to a special tract of the brain—a central organ which has for its function consciousness. But if we take any one of these ministering parts away, the content of consciousness and the faculties of the self are demolished. Inhibit the action of all, and the conscious self vanishes."

"But still," said Lady Snowdon, "the single consciousness would remain, ready to be itself again, if the ministering faculties were restored to it. Nothing could make the single self two selves."

"Couldn't it?" said Mr. Hancock. "Couldn't it? I'm interested to hear you say that. You think that, so long as it lasts, the self is a single thing, not made out of parts, and not divisible into them. Let me get at what I'm going to say by a roundabout little way of my own. Everyone knows that you are one of our best amateur photographers. May I ask, when you take a photograph, how many lenses you make use of at once?"

"As I never," said Lady Snowdon, "take stereoscopic views, I may tell you, if you care for the information, that I naturally use one. Does anybody use half a dozen?"

"Good," said Mr. Hancock, rubbing his hands, "good. You use what you would call one lens; but if you took it out of its brass mountings, you would find that your one lens was a union of two separate lenses, or perhaps even of three; each one of which, in a camera of sufficient focal length, might be used separately. Well, precisely the same thing is true of the human self. Instead of being an indivisible thing, it is capable of being shaken to

pieces, so that several selves shall reveal themselves within the same skull. I should dearly have liked to introduce you to some very good friends of mine—French doctors, Viennese doctors, and others. They could have shown you—last March they showed me—cases that would take your breath away. They could have shown you men and women whose personality was so divided, that in the single organism lived two, three, four, or even more, separate lives in alternation; the self of each life having its private memory, and each being distinguished by a special and different character. If any doubting Thomas wants a proof that the self is divisible, here is a proof ready for him. He can see it divided before his eyes. And now,” said Mr. Hancock, clapping his hands together, “I’ll say no more on my own account, and will call upon Mr. Glanville to sum up the conclusions we have reached in the course of this somewhat long discussion.”

“We began,” said Glanville, “with considering the qualifications which all theistic religion—no matter what its form—must impute to man in order to render him capable of any personal relationship, of a moral, an important, or even intelligible kind, with the great Cause or Force which is in, or behind, the Universe. We saw that man, since his body is obviously perishable, must be in his essence a something that neither rises with the body nor rots with it; that this something must be self-determining, and the source of its own energy; and that the sense of right and wrong which man undoubtedly possesses must be inexplicable except as mystical impress made on him by some principle of cosmic goodness, of which it is thus the mirror and the witness. Well, we have taken this conception of

man, which forms the basis of Theism, and examined it by the light which science is now throwing on all things ; and bit by bit we have seen the theistic man dissolved—reduced, as Mr. Hancock said, to a superstition of savages who would have given a private spirit to every little eddy in the Thames. We saw that his bodily life had the single cell for its father, and the atom of common matter, once thought dead, for its grandfather. We saw that his consciousness, as bodily life developed itself, rose out of the unconscious, and brought along with it his desires and innate ideas, as the slowly silted deposit of billions of years of living, concentrated in each parent, and handed on to his offspring. We saw that his conscience came also to him in the same way, and instead of reflecting any goodness which mysteriously pervades the heavens, merely represents the experience of a gregarious species on earth. We saw that being thus altogether the creature of transmitted forces, the very idea that man's will is free—that he is the author of his own actions—becomes as much of an absurdity as the idea that an eddy in a river, instead of being formed by the river, forms and directs itself ; and finally we saw something, which is merely what we have seen already, summed up in a kind of epigram. We saw that his indivisible self is as much an illusion as his freedom. We saw that this self is merely a point of light nucleated in a moving bubble, which is formed out of, and is drifting on a sea ; which may at a touch divide itself into a cluster of bubbles, or out of a cluster become one ; and which—I suppose I need hardly add this—bursts at last, never to be formed again. In fact," said Glanville, slightly changing his tone, " we have watched the theistic

man disappear like a burning candle. First his immortality disappears; then his God's voice in his conscience; then his power of directing his own actions; and then at last his very identity breaks to pieces, like the socket of a glass candlestick into which a candle has burnt, and whose fragments clink as they fall on a marble table. What can Theism mean for a poor creature like this? If it means that he is a part of, and therefore depends on, the Universe, it is a platitude. If it means that he can alter the nature of his dependence, it is an ineptitude. He cannot alter it in the first place; and if he could, the alteration would mean nothing. He, and his race likewise, will one day go the way of the mammoth, and the mastodon, and the lost continents; and what he does with himself has for him no more importance than his temperament, during the span of its endurance, may compel his consciousness to impute to it. He is like a sailor abandoned in a boat, in the middle of a shoreless ocean; and he can no more reach the Cosmos, or any principle behind it, than such a sailor could save himself by reaching the shores of Sirius. How strange, how absurd, in the face of facts like these, becomes that passage which I read you from our solemn and sanctimonious Theist! This satisfied individual goes mincing into the temple of science, with a pitying grimace at the Christians who are entering the church opposite, and is prepared to join in some new and superior divine service. Over the door of the temple is an inscription assumed by our intending worshipper to be something which means 'ad majorem dei gloriam.' Had our Theist stopped to examine it, the inscription would have been proved to be—what to every religion is the sole

scientific message—‘Abandon ye all hope who enter here.’”

A pause followed, which was, however, shortly broken by Mr. Hancock, who began a few alert “hems,” as though he was anxious to declare the conference ended; but before he could do so, Seaton begged that he might be heard once more.

“I have listened,” he said, “to all this carefully, and I don’t pooh-pooh it. But there are two things that I wish to urge. One I had better keep for some future occasion; but the other, which is simple, I should like to put to you now. Even if we accept man as the product of an unbroken process, which we can, under the form of matter, trace back to atoms and electrons, still, my dear Rupert, whatever is actual in man, such as thought, feeling, conscience, and so forth, must have existed in your electrons potentially. Moreover, when you get to your electrons, and you give them to us as the germs of thought, instead of explaining a mystery through a simple thing, you are merely explaining it through something more mysterious still.”

“Thank you, Mr. Seaton,” said Mrs. Vernon; “that’s just what I’ve been feeling all the time.”

“What you say, Alistair,” said Glanville, “is perfectly, indeed it is obviously true. In one sense science, instead of explaining anything, merely conducts us into deeper depths of the inexplicable. It can only bring us to the mainspring which makes the watch go, and of that it can tell us nothing. But the mainspring being given, what it does show us is this—that the movements made by the last wheel of the watch result, and can never be dissociated, from those made by the first. It can also show us a good deal more than this. It can’t show us how

the movements of the electrons in an atom can transform themselves into conscious thought, let atoms combine themselves as they may ; but it can give us an analogy which will make the transformation conceivable. There are certain substances, technically called *isomeres*, which are widely different in character, but which analysis reduces to exactly the same elements, combined in the same proportions. Starch, for example, in analysis, is the same thing as cotton ; cheese is the same thing as lean beef. The difference between the substances is due to nothing else than the different ways in which their several elements group themselves. This will show you how differences can result from atomic sameness. But a better illustration, perhaps, will be one even more familiar. How can thought arise as a consequence of atomic movement ? How can whiskey, which intoxicates, arise from water and barley ? The intoxicating property of the whiskey was latent in these symbols of temperance, but it was not latent in a form even remotely resembling alcohol. In the same way all modern men of science, as Mr. Cosmo Brock would tell you, recognise that the substance of the Universe contains all the elements out of which human thought springs, but contains them in a form so different from this thought that our knowledge of our own thought gives us no more clue to its nature than a glass of whiskey would give us to the nature of a sprouting barley-field."

"There may be something in what you say," replied Seaton. "Indeed, the idea you suggest is not unlike that of Schelling, who in some ways was Hegel's master. But the objection I raised just now was not my principal criticism. That, I fear, I must keep for a more convenient season."

"Well," said Glanville, "I believe it is getting

late, so I suppose you must. I will, therefore, Hancock, in order to save time, take the word out of your mouth, and declare this conference ended. I'll only do one thing more. Religious services generally end with a hymn. I'm going to suggest that we end with a hymn to-night. It's a hymn written by my inspired friend Lord Restormel, who, years ago, when he and I were at Berlin together, used to sit in a purple-and-gold smoking suit, and read Schelling and Fichte, when bed would have been much better for him."

"A hymn by me!" exclaimed Lord Restormel. "My dear Rupert, you're dreaming!"

"No," said Glanville, "though you may have been when you composed it. You were lying, wrapped up in a magnificent fur-coat, when you and I by moonlight were sailing in a boat on the Hellespont, and the words were supposed to be spoken, not by a congregation to the Deity, but by the Universe to the souls of men. Let us have it. Don't be modest. I'll start you with the first line:—

" 'Souls of myself, which are I, as the stars in their shining places.' "

Lord Restormel raised himself in his chair, not wholly displeased by this appeal. He took a large cigar from his mouth, and, encouraged by the solicitations of the party, recited the following lines slowly in a melodious voice:—

" 'Souls of myself, which are I, as the stars in their shining places
Gaze with their myriad eyes all night long on the sea ;
As the mirrored bride, on the bride from the depths of the mirror
gazes,
Saying with silent lips, Beloved of his heart, thou art she !
As the eyes of the bridegroom look down on the eyes of the bride he
embraces,
When his blood is as one with hers, and her soul is he ;
So, oh souls of myself, which are mine, from your myriad faces,
I, the soul of you all, I gaze on me.' "

CHAPTER V

LORD RESTORMEL was still lingering over the final phrase of his poem, when the chimes of a stable clock mixed their notes with his syllables. Several voices exclaimed at the unexpected lateness of the hour, but as no one seemed anxious to retire, the night being still hot, Glanville went into the house to give some directions to his butler, whose form, like a statue of reproach, was hesitating at the drawing-room window.

"Your verses," said Lady Snowdon to Lord Restormel, "were charming in point of music ; but they didn't, my dear friend, strike me as exactly comforting."

"No," said Mrs. Vernon. "Our poet mustn't be affronted, but I'd sooner, were this permitted me, fall asleep to the echoes of 'Lead, Kindly Light.'"

"You're a sensible woman," said Lord Restormel. "Most people would agree with you. Ah, Rupert, what have you got there?"

"I'm going," said Glanville, who had returned with a book and a lighted candle, "to give you one more reading. This book is the *Philosophy of Religion*, by Sabatier, the great French Protestant. Perhaps some of you may think that the criticisms which we reached just now are merely conclusions reached in a kind of intellectual nightmare, and that to-morrow we shall wake and laugh at them. They

have stood in my own case the test of many to-morrows, and Sabatier will show you that they are something more than dreams. Listen how this earnest divine describes the pass we have come to. 'Our age,' he says, 'has driven abreast the twofold worship of the moral ideal and the scientific method; but so far from being able to unite them, it has pushed them to a point where they seem to contradict and exclude each other. Science,' he goes on, repeating our own argument, 'has woven over everything its causal and necessary network,' and the result is a 'tragic contradiction between physical law and moral. Here,' he says, 'we have the origin of that strange *mal du siècle*—a sort of internal consumption—by which all cultivated minds are more or less affected. The more we reflect on the reasons that may be urged in favour of living and acting, the less capable we are of effort and action. Must we, then, give up thinking, if we would retain the courage to live, or resign ourselves to moral death so as to preserve the right to think?'

"But surely," said Mrs. Vernon, "he must see some escape from his difficulties. A religious man like that would never have put them in this frank way if he didn't."

"Mrs. Vernon," exclaimed Mr. Brompton, "allow me to tell you one thing. You evidently see to the very bottom of the clerical nature."

"His method of escape," said Glanville, "as I'll show you one of these days, is merely to end with ignoring what he sets out with asserting. I shall, I think, be able to do better myself; but it's too late to be planning escapes to-night."

"Is it?" said Seaton. "If we're really not going to bed directly——"

"Yes, my dear Alistair," said Glanville, putting a hand on his shoulder, "if we're not going to bed directly—well, I don't think we are."

"In that case," said Seaton, "if you would all listen to me once more—though you think me, I know, a mere dweller among my own clouds—I could show you a rift in yours which would still let the sun through on you. I told you I'd something to say beyond anything that I've said yet."

"Do," said Mrs. Vernon, "tell us. Send us to bed with something to cheer us up."

"I will, then," said Seaton, somewhat to the surprise of everybody, "accept, for argument's sake, the whole of your scientific gospel, with its atoms, and its electrons, and what not; and I'll suppose that the individual mind, instead of preceding the Universe, is developed from it by some process of evolution, precisely as your science declares it to be; and yet I will show you that, even on this hypothesis, philosophy can break open your prison for you with the very tools of science itself."

"What on earth," muttered Mr. Hancock, "can our gentleman be up to now?"

"Mr. Glanville," continued Seaton—"or was it Mr. Hancock?—expressed, not long ago, a very profound, but a little realised truth. He said that no speculative discovery bears its full practical point till it has conquered the imagination, besides convincing the intellect. This applies to philosophic as much as to scientific discoveries. The end and the result of philosophy is—let me say once more—to discover the nature of the relation of the Absolute Mind to the human. To make this discovery, as Hegel admitted, is difficult; but when once the imagination grasps what philosophy has rendered indubitable—I mean,

that the Absolute Mind and the human mind are akin—the speculative comprehension of this is turned into the religious passion of the human soul which longs for a personal union with the divine. Did any of you here ever look into Nietzsche?”

“I have,” said Glanville. “One of these days I shall quote him to you.”

“Well,” said Seaton, “though he isn’t a sound philosopher, nobody shows more clearly than he does what the impulse of the philosopher is, when it takes the form of religion. His own master-passion, he says, is the desire for speculative truth, which is more than any other delight, and which shall carry him where it will—‘over the sea, anywhere—even,’ he adds, ‘should it only carry him there where the shining suns of humanity have hitherto always perished.’”

“Upon my word,” said Lord Restormel, “that’s very finely put.”

“There,” said Seaton, “is an example of philosophy transformed into religion. The philosopher himself would explain the religious phenomenon by saying that it represented the affinity of the individual mind for the Universal. Now how would science explain it? In a way precisely parallel. It would say, in the language of physics, that the mind, which is merely another aspect of the brain, exhibits, when thus affected, a molecular or chemical affinity for the one cosmic Substance which it springs from, of which it forms a part.”

“I congratulate you,” said Glanville, “on the quickness with which you pick up our language. Haeckel himself might agree with what you have just said.”

“And now,” continued Seaton, “I’m going on to

a fact which has lately been treated at length by the best-known psychologist in America. I mean Professor James, whose *Varieties of Religious Experience* I found before luncheon in the library here. Well, as Professor James very rightly points out, the purely religious impulse reaches its fullest development in a mental state which transcends the intellect altogether, and is commonly called ecstasy."

"Excuse me," said Hancock, dragging his chair forwards, "but will you allow me to ask you what you mean by the word 'ecstasy'? Do you mean the queer kind of seizure which revivalists call conversion? For, let me beg leave to tell you that this and all kindred crises are purely physical disturbances—disturbances of the nerves and brain."

"That," said Seaton, "is the very thing I'm admitting. But come, Mr. Hancock, I didn't expect such an objection from you. You are one of those who believe that every mind-fact—not ecstasy alone—is a brain-fact; but you must not forget that every brain-fact, in that case, is also a mind-fact; and unless you deny to the mind all insight whatsoever, you do nothing to rob ecstasy of its value as a state of clairvoyance by merely insisting that a brain-state of some special kind is at the bottom of it."

"I think, Hancock," said Glanville, "our philosopher had you there."

"Well, Mr. Hancock," said Seaton, "to go back to your own question, I should certainly class conversion as one variety of ecstasy. The ecstasies of the great saints of the Roman Church, of the Indian ascetics, and the Platonic philosophers of Alexandria are other varieties of what is essentially the same thing."

"Oh," said Mr. Hancock, apparently much re-

lieved, "then you don't adduce the contortions of an epileptic cobbler as proving the truth of the doctrines of half-educated evangelical fanatics?"

"No, no," said Seaton, "nothing of the kind; of course not. So far as doctrines go, the ecstasies of each creed equally see in their ecstasies their own doctrines glorified. Ecstasy establishes nothing which in any religion is peculiar. But this singular experience, this mental and cerebral crisis, which we come across amongst men and women of all creeds, races, and classes, does attest and establish—this is what I want to urge on you—the reality of that which you have admitted to be the essence of all religion: I mean the moral affinity between the individual mind and the universal, or, if we like to put it so, between the individual man and the Universe, and the possible union of the two in some conscious supreme act."

Mr. Brompton groaned.

"We find," Seaton continued, "that under all their sectarian disguises—a St. Catherine sees Christ, a Platonist sees Apollo—the experience of all the ecstasies, all the so-called converted, is identical. What they experience is a sense of the fusion, the reconciliation, of the personal soul with the world-soul. We know this from evidence as ample and as clear as anything in the memoranda of any hypnotic doctor; and we also know that in point of exaltation and rapture no other kind of experience so much as approaches this one. Ecstasy, I should say, is the culminating religious act, revealing the world-soul in a form which may properly be called God—a God which in the end will become one with each of us, without our parting its garments or casting lots for the seamless vesture."

"According to you, then," said Mr. Hancock, whose spirit was still unsubdued, "we ought, instead of going about our practical business or giving ourselves up to useful thought and study, to devote all the time we can to frequenting revival meetings or to acquiring the art of self-hypnotism. We ought to lie in consecrated dens smoking religious opium. If we'd all of us done that always, we should be naked savages still."

"No," replied Seaton, "I didn't mean that any more than a Christian would mean that everybody should devote himself to the care of the poor. If everybody did that, we should make poverty universal. But the experience of ecstasy, though suitable for the few only, represents the mental or spiritual fruition to which all the higher affections and higher activities tend, such as love, poetry, great action, and the passion for nature. It's the open top to the chimney which alone makes a draught possible."

"But my dear Mr. Seaton," Mr. Hancock remonstrated in a voice which showed that the prospect of ecstasies had very little charm for himself, "are you at all aware that these crises to which you—and much to my surprise, Professor James also—attach so much importance are capable of being produced by purely mechanical means? The revivalist produces them by dwelling on the Day of Judgment, the heat of the eternal fireplace, the sinfulness of sin, and so on; but all the phenomena of conversion and religious ecstasy can be produced just as well, and with very much less fuss, by making the patient inhale nitrous oxide or ether diluted with common air. If you can give us salvation by gas, no doubt we shall be all your debtors; but I think I should protest against calling gas a religion."

"Mr. Hancock," said Seaton, "will you let me tell you this? You're again falling into sin. You've forgotten that this gas, of which I'm shocked to hear you speak so lightly, is, according to your own creed, a mode of the unknowable mind-power, and is, when it affects the brain, merely a delicate food by which the mind of the Universe stimulates the mind of the individual. A mathematician is stupid for want of nourishment: his brain won't act, his figures swim before him. He drinks a cup of beef-tea and solves some intricate problem. Do you doubt the accuracy of his restored mathematical insight because what restored it was a soup instead of a sermon?"

"Bravo, Alistair!" exclaimed Glanville. "Hancock, you must walk warily. Philosophy, like a lion, is waking up with the midnight. And now let me ask Mr. Seaton if his message is finished, for I think we can see plainly what its general drift is. It means that even if we are nothing but vanishing eddies in the Universe, we nevertheless, when our brains are in certain conditions, realise with a clearness which puts doubt out of the question that the sum of things is good in the religious sense of the word, and also that we are proved by experience to be capable of a personal union with it, the rapture of which is beyond our hopes and words. This is, I gather, what you mean, and you mean that this supreme experience has a solid scientific basis, because every stage of it may be shown to have a physical fact corresponding to it."

"So far as what I mean can be expressed in terms of science, you couldn't," said Seaton, "have expressed what I mean better."

Mrs. Vernon looked at Seaton with grave, appreciative eyes.

"Very well, then," said Glanville, "let me now make my own criticisms. And first, I shall begin with agreeing with you thoroughly as to one point. I mean that the experiences of converted persons and ecstasies are by no means, as many people think they are, ordinary foolish fancies. On the contrary, they result from a specific and highly peculiar brain-state. Ecstasy is a fact as specific as *delirium tremens*. The ecstatic sees his vision of divine things no less truly than the drunkard sees snakes in his boots."

Mrs. Vernon uttered an involuntary protesting "Oh!"

"Now the question for us to-night," Glanville went on, "is this. Does the ecstatic vision really succeed in giving us the elements which, as we have seen, are essential to any form of Theism? In the first place, does the vision correspond with any external reality? In the second place, if it does, does this external reality correspond in any way with what we mean by moral goodness? And is it, in the third place, of any very vital importance to us whether or no we cultivate the moods of mind which either culminate in such a vision, or are in harmony with it? Now the first thing, my dear Alistair, which I want to point out is this. There can be nothing in these visions of the ecstasies to distinguish them from those of the drunkard unless it be the fact that they help us, when we wake up from them, to discover that goodness of the Universe towards the individual soul which, without their aid, we fail to find any trace of. But do they, as a fact, do so? It is notorious that they do nothing of the kind. Saint Ignatius declared that, in ecstasy, he once 'distinctly saw the plan of the divine wisdom in the creation

of the whole world.' But he, no better than St. Augustine, or any less favoured theologian, was able to explain in terms of the waking intellect how sin could arise in lives created by a perfect God. His waking work was to give us the Jesuit order, which had to put up intellectually with the guidance of Aristotle's philosophy, and which could see no farther into a brick wall than we can. Indeed it is the peculiar feature of all this ecstatic knowledge that nothing which is verifiable—nothing which is even intelligible—can ever be brought away. The Universe remains the same unilluminated blank for us, and not only fails to illustrate what the ecstatic has seen, but contradicts it. And now let me go on to my next point. Even if we waive the first, and assume that the ecstatic vision does really point to the existence of some moral element in the Universe, we must ask whether its morality corresponds with anything which waking men mean by the word morality, and whether it has any connection with a free choice by ourselves of the spiritual or Godward life. Here again I agree with you in one of your arguments. The fact that ecstasy can be produced by inhaling a gas does no more to rob it of its claim to be a state of genuine insight than the fact that a fainting wrangler was restored by a basin of soup would detract from the value of the calculations which he managed to make on the strength of it. There, as I said at the time, I agree with you altogether. But the fact that ecstasy can be produced by inhaling a gas does show one thing in an exceptionally clear way—that this state of sublime insight, this flowering of the religious life, this rapturous foretaste of the final union with the divine, is entirely independent of anything like free-

will, of any self-generated effort on the part of the ecstatic himself. In especial, it shows us that this state has no necessary connection with anything in the ecstatic which the Theist would call goodness. The nitrous oxide is no respecter of persons. The ecstatic is the puppet of an experience under which he is just as passive as the holiday-makers who shout for excitement as they are borne along a switchback railway."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Mr. Brompton, with emphasis.

"And if," continued Glanville, "moral goodness in the ecstatic is no necessary antecedent to his consciousness of a union with some goodness in the Universe, we must either suppose that this goodness in the Universe has no more real existence than it need have in the man himself, or else we must suppose that if it exists at all, it is a goodness with which Theism and morality have nothing whatever to do. This last supposition is borne out by the fact that the goodness which your ecstasies are aware of is indescribable in human language. In other words, it has no intelligible connection with ordinary human life and with ordinary human standards. And now," Glanville continued, "for my third question. Is it possible to maintain on any scientific grounds that it is a matter of very great moment to any human being whether he enjoys the rapture of the ecstatic vision or no? Of course, you're aware, Alistair, that none of your present arguments have even suggested the persistence of the individual life after death."

"Perfectly," Seaton replied, not quite without embarrassment. "But although I hold, as a necessary postulate of philosophy, that the individual mind,

whilst it endures, is essentially independent of the body, philosophy does not maintain that its separate existence is permanent. Philosophy, on the contrary, rather tends to the conclusion that the individual mind, when the body has ceased to isolate it, goes back to, and is lost in, its living source."

"Thank you," said Glanville, "for helping me to finish what I have got to say. The fact remains that this singular experience, ecstasy, is highly agreeable to those persons who experience it. They enjoy in the course of their lives certain moments of rare pleasure, which you and I—less fortunate people—don't. But there, for them and for us, the importance of the matter ends. We miss the enjoyment of a glass or two of spiritual champagne, which might have pleased our palates, but would not have altered our circumstances. And then there is something more pertinent still than this. The ecstatic, according to you, merely enjoys a few foretastes of a union with the Absolute Mind, which you and I and all of us are, when our bodies dissolve, bound to enjoy in any case. How are we worse off, if, sure of this eternal blessedness, instead of trying to taste it before our time, we turn our attention to blessedness of other kinds, which, if we don't taste it now, we never shall taste at all? It seems to me, indeed, that your doctrine comes to this: the ecstatic is like a lady in a train who cranes her neck out of the window to get a distant glimpse of a watering-place for which everybody in the train is bound. Only here science comes in with its inconvenient proofs that the lady's view of the watering-place tells her nothing of what it is really like; that all the passengers will reach it whether they get the same glimpse or no, and whether their behaviour on the journey

is good, bad, or indifferent; and finally, that by the time they arrive there they will one and all be unconscious."

"Ah, Mr. Glanville," said Mr. Brompton, "I wish you would join our Church and give us a taste of your admirable expositions there."

"Mr. Glanville," said Lady Snowdon, "is a rather bewildering person. He starts with insisting that science is our only guide. We follow him in his interpretation of science as Hamlet followed the ghost; and now he ends with denouncing the best which it can tell us as nonsense."

"My dear Lady Snowdon," said Glanville, "you express my own view most accurately. Science is a Saturn which devours its own children. It dissolves everything—life, love, conscience, thought, will, into a host of simpler elements, which for us mean nothing except that they are for ourselves meaningless. The practical question, then," he continued, "for thinking men is this: How, in the universal vapour of forming and dissolving things, shall our minds discover a rock in the shape of some firm assertion, from which they may challenge this drift of disappearing appearances, or on which they may raise a watch-tower amidst and above the quick-sands?"

"I," said Mr. Brompton, "will show you the rock to-morrow."

"And so," said Miss Leighton to Lord Restormel, "our last cup of comfort is dashed from us. How cruel of Mr. Glanville to break it! Poor Mr. Seaton, he seems in a forlorn dream. Why will philosophers wear such untidy hair? How sultry and close it is! I wish we could sit up all night."

"Rupert," exclaimed Seaton, "I was wrong, I

believe, just now to try to express my meaning in the meagre language of science. Let me say just one more word. You contend that science makes religion impossible because religion implies freedom and science denies it. Well, take the case of love."

Miss Leighton looked up at the speaker with an odd, amused interest.

"Love," said Seaton, "true love is given freely; and yet the best thing that the lover can say to the loved is, 'I can't help loving you.'"

"How in the world," murmured Miss Leighton, "could Mr. Seaton have discovered that?"

"Well," said Seaton, "there it is. There's the reconciliation you are in search of. The supreme freedom is identical with the supreme necessity. There is Hegel's secret."

"What was that?" said Mrs. Vernon in a tone of alarm. "Did you feel it? It was a drop of rain."

"Yes," Seaton was meanwhile continuing, "there is Hegel's discovery—the great truth which makes everything clear and simple—that Being and Not-Being are the same."

"Another," said Lady Snowdon, "another. Mr. Glanville, I shall go indoors. Here it comes—it's a downpour. However little I am to believe, I insist on not getting wet."

These words were a signal for a general hurried movement. Lord Restormel, under pretence of protecting Miss Leighton, showed a distinct tendency to put his arm round her waist. The young lady, however, was equal to the occasion, and gained the house neither aided nor discomposd.

“What, Alistair,” said Glanville, “are you hurrying too? So raining, after all, is not the same as not-raining. My dear fellow, if your philosophy melts in the first thunder-shower, it will never convince us that being damned is exactly the same thing as being saved.”

BOOK VI

A TOY SHOP AND A BLIND ALLEY



CHAPTER I

"**I** HAD such bad dreams last night," said Mrs. Vernon, as she entered the breakfast-room. "I dreamed three times that the Universe was an infinite feather-bed, and that I was dissolving into it."

Lord Restormel had begun his repast already. It consisted of a slice of toast, a tumbler of hock, and grapes. The peculiarity of this diet was to him only one of its recommendations. It was endeared to him both by its picturesqueness, which was eminently suitable to a poet, and by its lightness, which was grateful to a student who generally got up with a headache.

"Come, my dear lady," he said, "and sit by a fellow-dreamer. I dreamed a poem once at Calcutta, after a night spent in philosophy. It astonished me by its magnificence. On waking I wrote it down. It was a terrible chastisement to my vanity. I described myself as being turned into the elephant which holds up the world—or rather, I think, into one of its legs; and then into the shell of the tortoise which holds up the elephant. The markings on the shell I said were my thoughts and feelings, 'patterned with gold and dark.' That phrase, in my dream, seemed to me a revelation. Over there sits a gentleman," he continued, indicating Mr. Brompton, "who is going to redeem us from dreams and give us salvation by reality."

Mr. Brompton, who, in an ordinary way, would have been charmed by such a tribute as this, wore an air of important abstraction, and seemed hardly to understand what had been said of him.

The rain of the night had continued, and was still falling lightly, making the air fresh and soft with a scent of gardens ; and a morning indoors being the only probable prospect, Glanville proposed to show his guests the house, a portion of which they had neither used nor entered. There were bedrooms to be seen with some fine French furniture in them, and some fine mirrors and hangings in a suite of disused sitting-rooms. No one was roused, however, to any pitch of emotion till, a door being opened in a wall covered with decaying damask, the sightseers found themselves in a billiard-room, and in the presence of a modern billiard-table. The room, which seemed to have been built about fifty years ago, was more than commonly spacious, and was furnished with a hideous comfort. Raised seats, upholstered in crimson rep, ran along the walls lengthways ; and at one end was a sort of daïs or platform, on which stood some chairs and a pale mahogany writing-desk. The sole mural decorations consisted of a row of cues, a board for scoring, and the framed rules of the game. Glanville was preparing to apologise for the existence of this late addition, made by a sporting occupant in the early Victorian epoch, when a sound, which seemed to be expressive of sympathetic and admiring recognition, broke from one of the party. The person from whom it broke was Mr. Brompton. All eyes were turned on him in surprised inquiry.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's the very thing. If only there were a strip of gilding along the cornice,

to make the whole affair look rather more glad, and if there were only a few cheap plaster busts of Euclid, and Bacon, and Justinian, and Confucius, and others, put round the walls on brackets, and if the billiard-table were taken away, this room would be exactly like my own Ethical church. The day is wet, Mr. Glanville. We can't meet out of doors. May I, when the time comes, give you my address here? I should just stand on that platform at the end—look here," he said, moving to the spot in question, "I should take up my position like this. A hymn, or rather a poem, by some great non-theistic writer, would be sung; and then I should begin to talk—talk just on the levels of ordinary common sense and natural human feeling; and in spite of all this destructive work of science, I'd engage to show you in five-and-twenty minutes a beautiful religious soul developing itself under the ribs of death."

"I declare," said Glanville, "I think your idea is excellent. As you say, it's still raining. We had better be saved under shelter. I hope our distinguished friend won't get wet on the launch."

"Who," said Mrs. Vernon, "is the distinguished friend you're expecting?"

"Didn't I tell you?" said Glanville; and he mentioned the friend's name. "He too has consented to enlighten us with some of his wisdom; but he's coming to lunch only. He insists on going back to-night."

Mr. Brompton heard the name. It seemed first to surprise, then to delight him, and then, when he had had time for reflection, to mortify, or at least perplex him.

"I couldn't," he said at last, "have a more

weighty ally. We think alike. He is, as it were, a schoolman, an Aquinas, of the Ethical Church. I merely vitalise his ideas, which are the same as mine, into a practical, a popular, a dynamic form. But for that very reason I would that I might speak before his arrival. You then would see that neither of us copies the other, but that our respective arguments are fortified by their natural, their inevitable coincidence. Only in that case—are you ready for serious things so early?—I should have to speak this morning.”

“I,” replied Glanville, “am just as ready for truth at twelve as at half-past four. What does everybody say?”

Mrs. Vernon and Lady Snowdon said that they must positively write some letters; but that an hour hence—namely, at twelve o’clock—they would be ready. Matters, therefore, were so arranged; and Mr. Brompton announced that he would stay where he was meanwhile, and prepare his notes.

When the specified time arrived, his auditors found him in position. At first, however, a slight difficulty arose from the fact that Mr. Hancock was inclined, in his capacity of chairman, to occupy the platform with the speaker, and take charge of the proceedings. This, it appeared, was not at all to Mr. Brompton’s taste. He proposed, he said, to give them a service, not to take part in a conference. “But,” he added, “if that small harmonium which I see under the row of billiard cues could be lifted on to the platform, and if Mr. Hancock would play a hymn on it, the music of which I could give him, I should be very glad of his assistance.”

“I’m afraid,” said Mr. Hancock curtly, “my only knowledge of music consists in my knowledge that

I can't stand harmoniums. So let me by all manner of means be a humble member of the congregation."

Mr. Brompton crossed his arms on his breast. His face assumed a dictatorial composure, and as soon as his hearers were duly seated before him, he began in a tone which was at once grave and colloquial.

"If," he said, "I were really in my own church, and if we had our hymn-books, a capable accompanist, and so forth, I should begin—well, one of our favourite hymns is—

"Oh may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In lives made better by their presence."

But to-day I should rather have chosen that poem by Matthew Arnold, in which he asks what is the secret of the calm courses of the stars, and in which the stars answer him that they perform their own duty, without asking 'in what state God's other works may be.' However, as we can't sing that, I will begin with two texts from Emerson—two glorious sentences. 'The Highest dwells with every man, if the sentiment of duty be there.' 'I overlook the sun and stars, and feel them to be but fair accidents and effects, which change and pass.' The particular application of these I will make plain to you presently.

"And now," said Mr. Brompton, "to business. The Ethical Church accepts with absolute freedom the entire revelation of science, and it welcomes it, not in spite of its destructiveness, but because of it. Science creates, as it were, the vacuum into which the Ethical Church rushes. Science, with its scourge of small cords, drives clericalism out of the temple. Our discussions of yesterday will show you how

completely it does so. Let me recall to your minds the manner in which the Bishop of Glastonbury, acting precisely like the clerics of my own late Church, endeavoured to resist this process of spiritual eviction. He said that the foundations of all theistic faith were to be found in what he called three gulfs, or as others of his kidney call them, three rifts or gaps. One was the impassable gulf between dead matter and the energy that moves and directs it. Another was the impassable gulf between lifeless matter and living. The third was the impassable gulf between animal life and human. Gulfs, rifts!" said Mr. Brompton, with an engaging laugh. "What fine things to build on! Ah, these priests—these priests! But yesterday they were declaring that their God was revealed to us in our knowledge of nature. Now they are driven to amend their plea, and declare that He is revealed to us in the blackness of our supposed ignorance of it. Gulfs, rifts! Yes, since the days of Galileo our theologians have been like rabbits, living in dark holes; and as soon as one was stopped with good incontrovertible fact, they scampered in terror across the sunlight, and disappeared into others. Ay, and the same process has continued to our own day; but every day the holes are becoming fewer. Some little chemist is sent into one of them like a ferret, and out he comes with the body of a dead or dying theologian. Each of these gulfs, or rifts, or rabbit-holes, which the Bishop indicated as our sure and eternal refuge—the only remaining ones which he and his friends can find—has now, without his knowledge, been completely stopped up by science. The more we learn with regard to the nature of matter, the more clear does it become—as is illustrated by the discovery of

those electrons in which matter and energy are not even formally distinguishable—that between matter and energy there is no rift at all, but that they are one and the same fact. And with regard to the Bishop's two other gulfs or rifts, the case is just the same. The rifts between the conscious and the unconscious, and the animal life and the human, have disappeared completely within the last twenty years. And with the disappearance of these hollows of ignorance the whole fable of the cosmic God in the skies, and the permanence of the human unit, disappears also."

"I declare," murmured Mr. Hancock, "he talks much better sense than I'd looked for."

"And now," continued Mr. Brompton, "let me take up my own parable. Science gives us an empty heaven; but, if we will only understand it, it gives us a full earth. It takes from us a God, and it takes from us an immortality, which are nonsense. It gives us equivalents to both, which are not only facts, but sense. Churches may topple down. New Jerusalems and white thrones may vanish, but the light of ethical humanity will only shine more resplendent. Last night Mr. Glanville asked for a rock—I am here to give him one. The flame," said Mr. Brompton, whose mother was half Irish, "the flame of humanity is its own rock."

"You will perceive," he continued, "that throughout my language is strictly scientific. Let us now go into details. I accept—we of the Ethical Church accept—the definition of religion, which was reached yesterday afternoon, as a desire, accompanied by a belief in the possibility of its actual satisfaction, for some larger kindred Being, into which, by moral conduct, the individual life may expand itself. We

have seen that such a Being is not to be discovered in the Universe, still less in the organic part of it artificially isolated from the rest. In what Mr. Hancock has called organic pantheism we find not only non-morality and non-wisdom, but definite immorality, cruelty, injustice, and stupidity. In what, then, do we find the sublime attributes we are in search of? In what larger life, kindred to our own, do we find these? We find them in the race—the species—of which we form a part. We find them in Humanity regarded as an organic whole. And we find them there precisely as Theists have found them in their fancied God. We find them through the voice of conscience. Moreover, the tribal, the terrestrial, the purely human pedigree of this faculty, which science has made so obvious, and which for the Theist takes away all its value, is the very thing which for the Ethical Church invests it with its supreme significance. It makes us realise that conscience points to, just as it arises from, social needs, not astral uniformities.

“Ah, but here I seem to hear a repetition of something that was said in the course of our dispute yesterday; and I shall answer this as it was answered then. It was then objected that since nothing comes out of a sack but what was in it, this sacred voice of conscience, having been, as it were, distilled into our brains from the Universe, must pre-exist in the Universe as a sanctity on a larger scale. Mr. Glanville answered this argument when he said that the simpler antecedent, as such, need have none of the properties which we value in the more complex consequent. Water and barley, so long as they remain water and barley, have none of the properties which the drinker values in whiskey. A cotton

shirt, unless I am informed wrongly, is alcohol in another form. But the teetotal saint does not condemn it on this account; neither does the drinker find in it a stimulant. So too a Bacon, a Newton, an Emerson, a Frederic Harrison—all have been evolved from a race of helpless savages; but they do not go to savages as teachers or emblems of wisdom. No—no. The common sense of the matter is just this—that when a higher thing rises out of a lower thing, the latter is—here is surely an identical proposition—lower than what we admit to be higher, and is certainly not superior to it. Let us, then, apply this truism to the human race and the Universe, and we find it transfigured into the new and inspiring truth which it is the great mission of the Ethical Church to teach—namely, that, so far as any knowledge, imagination, or conjecture of ours can reach, the human race, or Humanity, is not lower than the Universe, but higher; and it, and not the Universe, is the one proper, verifiable, and morally responsive object of enlightened man's religion. This Great Being is more than any cosmic God. It surrounds us, creates us, cradles us, helps us from our first hour of life; and it asks of us, as our reasonable service, that we also should help it. Is not this," said Mr. Brompton, conscious of having made a point, "a true religion, if the essence of religion be, as we have all admitted, the enlargement of the individual life into something larger than, and yet kindred to, itself? Is it not, I ask you, in the strictest sense a scientific religion, since the conscience which animates it derives its sole authority from being, what science says it is, the voice of tribal experience—the revealer of what is good, not for each man, but for Humanity? And

finally—here is one of its most glorious and hopeful features—is it not a growing religion, since the voice of tribal experience becomes with each succeeding century not only richer and riper, but ever and ever wider, till at last there shall be one tribe only, and that tribe shall be mankind?”

Mr. Brompton looked down and coughed, as though waiting for applause, and collecting his thoughts also. Then he began again.

“I’m quite sure,” he said, “you will see now how false, how foolish, how babyish, is the alarm of the Christian, or the Theist, who thinks that with the elimination of his phantom God, and his own personal immortality, any one of the virtues which he prizes most will perish. All remain, changed only by being intensified.”

“May I,” said Mr. Hancock from his seat, “take an ex-chairman’s privilege, and ask you, on my own account and Lady Snowdon’s, what, according to the Church of Humanity, is the root-idea of virtue?”

“Ah,” replied Mr. Brompton, as though the question helped him out, “I like that interruption well. At bottom all practical virtues—even those of mythological Christianity—are of one and the same character. Virtue is social endeavour—constant consecrated struggle to serve and improve one’s neighbour, who becomes, under our new religion, magnified into all mankind, and is thus also made immortal, like a corporation that never dies. And now let us go deeper yet——”

“Pardon me,” said Mr. Hancock, “but I’ve still one small question to ask you. You speak of Humanity as a corporation that never dies. Well, I admit it may last for some time yet, just like our

Welsh coal. But if anything's certain, it's certain that, like our coal, it will die out some day."

"To that objection," said Mr. Brompton, "and to others of the same kind, we have one sovran answer, which has been given independently by all the great minds of our Church. Our answer to such objections simply is: Don't think about them. If our ethical enthusiasm is chilled by the idea of the vastness of the Universe, we say, in the words of Mr. Frederic Harrison, 'Away with such unmanly musings!'—or, in the words of Arnold, that we ask no more than the stars do what exists outside our own living activity; or, again, we quote one of my texts from Emerson, who by a glorious effort of the imagination turns the tables on the Universe, and declares that the Universe is an effect which fades and passes, and that the human race is what endures. And now let us go back to virtue, the essence of which is social struggle."

"But surely," interrupted Mr. Hancock again, "we have one and all agreed that struggle, as an effort proceeding from the individual, is shown by science to be a delusion."

"Oh," said Mr. Brompton hastily, "we mustn't push things too far. Why, personal struggle is the very essence of virtue. Psychology tells us that. Sociology tells us that. These are sciences, and there's no getting out of what they tell us. Virtue is essentially an heroic struggle with imperfection. Virtue is the struggle with bad social conditions, bad laws, bad health, bad education, bad everything; and out of the resistance required by badness for its overthrow the ethical rapture springs. It's only for this reason that men are higher than animals; or that Humanity, when perfect, will be better than a hive of

bees. Struggle, heroism, the rapture of self-denial—why these are the very facts with which the Ethical Church starts. Human life would be a blind alley without them. Let me put more strongly still this sacred and assured truth——”

But here Mr. Brompton was interrupted. A servant made his appearance, who announced to Glanville that the expected guest had arrived, and asked if he should be shown into the billiard-room.

“Pray not,” said Mr. Brompton. “Pray not, on any account. Let us hear after luncheon what the great man has to say for himself; and I’ll give you the rest of my own discourse this evening. You’ll be almost amused by seeing how exactly he agrees with me.”

CHAPTER II

“THIS is,” said Mrs. Vernon, “a quite unexpected pleasure. I hope you’ll find the conditions under which we are meeting now more satisfactory than those under which we last parted. I shall never forget how you snubbed me at that unfortunate ball.”

“I trust,” said the gentleman addressed, “that you did not really misapprehend the tenor of my remarks on that occasion. It is true that I deem conversation which consists of trivial personalities, and the habitual course of conduct out of which such conversation springs, to be—perchance I had best not specify what. But social intercourse which results in any serious comparisons of general facts and problems, as they present themselves to various minds, even when it is associated with laughter and the ordinary commonplaces of friendship, I look upon as being, in moderation, healthful, both for mind and body.”

So spoke Mr. Brock, for the guest was none other than he, to Mrs. Vernon, who, with her customary social promptitude, had made her way to the drawing-room, anticipating even her host.

“Well,” said Mrs. Vernon, “you’ve heard, no doubt, from Mr. Glanville that everybody here is in a mood which ought to meet your approval. We’ve all of us been asking how much religion and morality

science will leave us when we really understand what it teaches us. Oddly enough, the subject has proved so interesting that nobody here has been talking about anything else."

"Surely," said Mr. Brock, "you pay a poor compliment to human nature if you consider it odd that intelligent men and women should manifest any interest in the question which concerns them most."

"I'm glad," replied Mrs. Vernon, "to hear you say that. Mr. Glanville has been trying to indoctrinate us with the forlorn conclusion that science won't allow us to have any belief in anything—not even in our souls and an intelligent ruler of the Universe."

Mr. Brock looked down on Mrs. Vernon with an expression of amazed compassion. "Religion," he began, "is not a system of belief, but a state of mind arising from our knowledge that reality is unknowable."

But here he was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Snowdon, who was closely followed by the host and the rest of the party. Lady Snowdon acknowledged the great philosopher's greeting with a majesty so cordial that it would have given him unmixed delight if it had not been too suggestive of an intellectual equality with himself. Mr. Hancock shook him by the hand with an effusiveness reserved for the celebrated. Mr. Brompton made a statement, which struck Mr. Brock as superfluous, to the effect that he had read with admiration many of Mr. Brock's works; whilst Miss Leighton confused him for a moment by the curious magic of her manner, which made him vaguely feel that they were people of different sexes. Lord Restormel, however, who lounged into the room late, so quickened his step

when he perceived Mr. Brock's presence, and held him by the arm with so much affectionate reverence, that Mr. Brock, when they presently went in to luncheon, felt himself after all amongst reasonable human beings, who, even if they were not perfectly wise already, were desirous and prepared to be made so by a little of his own teaching.

Such being the case, he was good enough not to be displeased by the fact that the conversation, during the greater part of the meal, was adroitly diverted by the host from the lofty questions that had been engaging them, and confined itself to what Mr. Brock described as "proximate interests"—such as the Irish climate, the character of the Irish peasantry, with their imperfect sense of veracity; and even the character of his own house at Ballyfergus, of the meals supplied to him by his landlady, and the manner in which he ate them.

"I find," he said, "that a repast such as the present, where the dishes are numerous, and some rich and elaborate, is, when eaten in company, frequently much more wholesome than one which is severely simple, if the latter be consumed in solitude. It is important to remember that, when we eat our food in company, the cerebral and nervous actions set up by conversation, and even by laughter, constitute a powerful digestive. As for myself," Mr. Brock continued, "when I dine alone I have my soup brought to me in two successive tea-cups, with an interval of ten minutes between them, during which I pace the room in order to promote circulation; or I stimulate my risible faculties by perusing accounts in the newspapers of the blunders—of daily occurrence, as Mr. Glanville knows—perpetrated by the Government, or this or that public body; and the

rest of my meal is consumed under the same conditions."

The unusual character of Mr. Brock's table-talk secured for him an attention which was highly agreeable to himself, and prepared both himself and his listeners for the still more prominent position he was destined to occupy when the business of the afternoon should begin. It was not, however, till the ladies of the party had withdrawn that any reference was made to the actual business itself. The subject then was at once broached by Mr. Hancock, who lost no time in recovering the sense of leadership, of which Mr. Brompton's ministrations before luncheon had deprived him.

"I suppose, Brock," he said, "you've been posted up by Mr. Glanville in what's been going on here. I'm speaking of these conferences of ours, which are rivals to those of your neighbours."

Mr. Brock replied that he had, in a general way, been informed of the nature of these discussions, and the point which had now been reached. "Mr. Glanville," he went on, "originally suggested that I should say something on the subject of Universal Causation, a complete demonstration of which would be the sum total of science. I gather, however, that, under present circumstances, it would be more helpful and appropriate if I said something briefly about the application of this principle to ethics."

"Precisely," said Mr. Hancock. "That's just what's wanted."

"What, then," said Mr. Brock, "are the points with which I should deal especially? Shall I show how the basis of ethics is strictly natural and sociological? Shall I go into the tribal, or the natural, history of conscience? Is that the sort of thing you desire? I

offered to do this at Ballyfergus, but my clerical neighbours would not hear of it."

"No, no," interposed Mr. Brompton. "Perhaps I may put in a word here. I have, Mr. Brock, as a devout follower of yourself, been going into all that this morning. I've been showing that your science does nothing to destroy virtue, duty, ethical endeavour, and so on—that these arise from the necessities of social co-operation; but if some of our party—especially the ladies—could know that I had your vast authority behind me, I, as a practical teacher, should be much helped and fortified."

"Mr. Brock," said Glanville, "can feel for the needs of ladies. The other day I found him instructing one. By the way, what progress towards truth is your Eloisa making?"

"Mr. Glanville," said Mr. Brock, with an indulgent wave of the hand, "you banter me. I shocked you, perchance, the other day by admitting my indifference to poetry. I am indifferent to it mainly because it occupies itself, in a manner so inordinate, with the attraction of a woman, considered as a woman, for man—an attraction the importance of which, even if we admit its concomitants to be pleasing, is, apart from its functional character, beyond my own comprehension. I admit, however, that contact with the female intelligence is instructive; because, as to intellect, a quick-witted and superior female may be taken as representing fairly the capacities of the ordinary male; and if one such woman can understand what I put before her, I make myself experimentally sure that it will be understood by a thousand men. I am glad, therefore, that this gentleman, who has been giving you some popular science"—Mr. Brompton frowned—"should have

mentioned the requirements of your ladies, so that I may phrase my exposition accordingly."

It here dawned upon Mr. Brock that he was not paying a very ingratiating compliment either to the absent ladies of the party, or even to the present gentlemen. He therefore pulled himself up with some faint sign of confusion. "But," he said, "I am straying. What I ought to ask is, that this gentleman should inform me as to how I may supplement the exposition—I make, no doubt, an admirable one—which he has, it appears, been giving you of the natural basis of ethics."

"Yes, Mr. Brompton," said Glanville, "tell him that. The matter rests with you."

"Well," said Mr. Brompton, "what I should personally wish is this—that, assuming a knowledge on our part that the basis of ethics is natural, he should give us the benefit of his unrivalled authority as a specialist, and show us, and the ladies of our party in particular, how the social conscience does actually give us an equivalent, and more than equivalent, to the virtues of an outworn theology."

"Be it so," said Mr. Brock blandly, with a slight bow over his coffee-cup, "though I fear this gentleman flatters me when he invests me with the character of a specialist."

The rain by this time had nearly, but not quite ended. It was therefore arranged that Mr. Brock should dispense his philosophy in the portico. Mr. Hancock, with great alertness, made a suitable disposition of chairs there; and in order that his own position should not again be taken from him, he began, almost before the company had assumed their places, to announce that Mr. Brompton, in his capacity of religious teacher, had given them, in out-

line, a system of purely natural ethics. "But," he continued, "as a general desire prevails to hear the matter put in a somewhat more formal way, we are fortunate in having amongst us this afternoon the most celebrated and greatest of all our scientific philosophers, and it is now my privilege to request him to be good enough to address us."

Mr. Brock seemed a little doubtful as to whether he should sit or stand. He decided in favour of sitting, and so adjusted his chair that he was able to lean his elbow on Mr. Hancock's table—an arrangement which gave him the air of an overwhelming schoolmaster at his desk.

"I suppose," he said, "that as the rudiments of the problem have been put before you already, I may plunge *in medias res*. Let us, then, make a start with considering an ethical precept which occupies a conspicuous place in the Hebrew Table of Commandments—the precept 'Thou shalt not kill.' Now, does the desirability that men (we who are here, for instance) should abstain from killing one another depend on a belief that murder has been supernaturally forbidden? Would it not be equally evident, in the absence of any such prohibition, that no social aggregate could prosper, or indeed exist, if the practice of murder were not rigorously condemned and suppressed?"

"I think," said Mr. Brompton, "that I've made that plain myself."

"Well," said Mr. Brock indulgently, "proceed we a step farther. We have seen that all social experience must give rise to a social judgment that abstinence from murder is needful for the preservation of the social aggregate; and along with this judgment there necessarily arises also a regulative system, by means of which the commission of murder is penal-

ised. But now mark this. A man cannot be called moral who is withheld from committing murder only by dread of external penalties—who would use his dagger if he did not see the policeman. We call him moral when the regulative system within him is so adapted to the needs of the social environment that it repeats the inhibitions or injunctions of the regulative system without. And here let me take another step. Just as it is a fact that human beings acquire gradually, but not at once, the powers of walking, of speaking, of reasoning, and so forth, so it is a fact that an adaptation of the kind just referred to does take place within them, in the course of generations. So far as murder is concerned, it has taken place already. The judgment and the feelings of the ordinary civilised man with regard to this particular act have so far adapted themselves to the needs of the social organism that, though the commission of a murder might afford him some immediate gratification, the murderous impulse is inhibited without conscious effort. And this inner or subjunctive adaptation of the judgment and feelings to the objective requirements of the life of the social organism, always having for its concomitant a specific change in the cerebral and nervous system of the individual, constitutes the development of what is commonly called conscience. Well," said Mr. Brock, beginning to struggle with a slight cough, "this which holds good so obviously in the simple case of murder holds good equally throughout the entire field of conduct. Do you think, Mr. Glanville, I might ask for a glass of water? I am troubled at times by a momentary catarrhal irritation."

"Isn't that what I told you?" said Mr. Brompton while the glass of water was being fetched, and Mr.

Brock in the interval breathed on and rubbed his spectacles. "But, Mr. Brock," he went on, "without disrespect to yourself, I may say that I've gone over all this preliminary ground already."

"Well, then," said Mr. Brock, when he had solemnly sipped his water, "shall I proceed to show how the promptings of the social conscience coincide in all important respects with the current ideas of duty, and, farther, how the regulative, the inhibitive control of conscience becomes gradually transformed into the active commands of sympathy?"

"Ah," said Mr. Brompton, "yes; let us hear you on those great points."

"I think," said Mr. Brock, "we will first take another by the way. It is certain to be objected by supernaturalists that murder—I still keep that as an example—is to be condemned, not only because it is a wrong to society, but also because it ministers to a pleasure inherently wrong in the individual, to wit, that of gratified hatred, the wrongness of which is referable to some mysterious inner standard not dependent on the facts and needs of society. But this very action which we are contemplating will at once dispose of this error. For what is hatred? It is hatred of another person. It arises only when a social relation develops itself; and thus the condemnation we pass on the pleasure of gratified hatred springs from those social relations which alone make such pleasures possible. Has, then, a man no moral duties to himself? Here we come to a question which the ladies, I judge, will consider interesting."

Lady Snowdon and Mrs. Vernon greeted this announcement with approval.

"To that question," said Mr. Brock, "we must answer both 'Yes' and 'No.' To speak strictly, the

moral duties of man arise solely from the fact that he is a member of the social organism; but he is capable of being a member of it only because he also is an organism himself; and in order to play his social part fittingly his individual organism must be in a sound condition.

"Now such soundness can be obtained and preserved only by a frequent subordination of immediate and intense pleasure to a pleasure which is more remote and diffused, namely, that of general well-being. Take we, for example, the familiar pleasures of intemperance. Intemperance is biologically immoral, not on account of the immediate pleasure resulting from it, but on account of the remoter evils—the disturbance of the balance of faculties in the individual, and the consequent reduction in the amount of pleasure which his life yields him on the whole."

"You would say, then, I presume," interposed Alistair Seaton, "that 'Blessed are the pure in heart' is a maxim of biological rather than of transcendental morality."

"It is," replied Mr. Brock solemnly. "The maxim, in so far as it is self-regarding, means that the balance of functions is exceptionally liable to be disturbed—though myself I contest the assumption—by the absence of those inhibitions which are connoted by the term purity."

"But, Mr. Brock," said Lady Snowdon, "surely pleasure is not the test of morality. Is it, Mr. Glanville?"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Brock, with a slightly sarcastic smile, "you think that the test of right conduct is not the pleasure it produces, but the pain. Nay, nay. We can none of us really mean

that. Ultimate pleasure at some time, and of some kind, is an inextinguishable element in the conception of all right action. What does Supernaturalism promise us as an inducement to act rightly? A peace that passes understanding. This may not be a physical pleasure, but it is a pleasure none the less. Indeed, ethical or moral science may be described as the science of pleasure. The Beatitudes themselves, in their larger meaning, exemplify this. Blessed are the poor, blessed are the merciful, because—according to the supposition of the speaker—social aggregates in which such persons are most numerous are aggregates which secure to their members generally pleasures, or pleasurable states, the greatest possible alike in length and breadth.

"Perhaps," continued Mr. Brock, "such a statement shocks some of you. Provisionally they may find relief in the thought that the maximum of social and individual pleasure alike can be achieved, as things are, only by self-denials. I have, however, something more to point out than this, which will convert their relief into satisfied and even eager acquiescence. I am now going to take you rapidly to the culmination of scientific ethics—indeed, to the final message of all science, so far as our practical welfare is concerned.

"We have seen that conscience is the internal counterpart or echo of the laws and punishments which societies have to frame and enforce, in order to deter their members from acts which are anti-social. In this way a man becomes a law to himself. The requisite fear of offending develops itself in his own brain. But in proportion as this regulative and purely inhibitive fear gradually produces an amelioration of the conditions of the social aggregate,

another kind of feeling begins to develop along with it. This feeling is sympathy, or the natural tendency to derive pleasure and pain, not only from the enjoyments or sufferings directly experienced by ourselves, but also from the re-representation of the enjoyments and sufferings of others. This feeling, moreover, be it marked, not only is the constant ally of the sense of obligation, or conscientious fear, but essentially goes beyond it, and is always tending to supersede it. Conscience is inhibitive. Sympathy is impulsive. Instead of making an anti-social egoism painful, it makes social altruism pleasurable. Sympathy is, as it were, a second and new locomotive, attached to the train of progress, whilst that which is inhibitive fear is by degrees wearing itself out."

"True, true," murmured Mr. Brompton. "Precisely what we are always preaching."

"And pray let me," said Mr. Brock, "urge on you that this is no mere theory. It is fact, and, if we will only look round us, familiar fact. Let me give you for an example the care of parents for their offspring. Times were when things were different. The primitive father did not recognise his offspring as his own. The care of it devolved on the female, and ceased as soon as the offspring was able to shift for itself. To-day, in most races, both parents make constant efforts for its welfare; and these efforts, though to the parents they are proximately painful, have become in their minds so associated with the welfare of another being, that the requisite sacrifices are made without any sense of obligation.

"And now for another point. The development of this particular form of sympathy was the work of ages; but look you round at the world as it is, and then look back at the world as it was the day

before yesterday. You will see developments of the same kind, but very much more rapid, and no less remarkable. Take, for example, the manner in which war is now conducted. Instead of killing the wounded, we endeavour to cure them in our hospitals. Four generations ago, to free a slave would have been applauded as an act of generosity; now to own one is looked upon as a heinous crime. Conditions of squalor among the poor, which our fathers regarded as inevitable, excite in ourselves compassion and a strong desire to remove them.

“Well, all these developments, like that of parental affection, are plainly due to the development of the sympathetic feeling, which is ever increasing the number of those pains and pleasures of others, which are, as subjects of mental re-representation, painful and pleasurable to ourselves. Remains it now that I point out to you very briefly the further cause to which this development of sympathy is similarly due itself, especially its more rapid development during recent times. Its cause is to be found in these rapid social changes themselves, most of which rest on scientific discovery, such as the spread of education, the growth of the newspaper press, the increased production of wealth, the rise in the standard of living—all which things combine to bring before us an increasing volume of prosperous and pleasurable conditions, from which our sympathies derive pleasure, and which we wish therefore to increase still further, and to bring before us also pains, previously unnoticed, from which our sympathies derive pain, and which irritate us till we see them eradicated. The development of our social sympathies is even now partial only——”

"Unfortunately," interposed Mrs. Vernon, "nobody can deny that."

"Nay," said Mr. Brock, "fortunately. For if, whilst society still remained imperfect, and contained pains and evils not for the time removable, our sympathies were developed in such wise that all the pains of others affected us as though they were actually our own, acute misery would in that case be the lot of everybody. A single toothache in Pekin would make all London beside itself. But in precise proportion as suffering tends to disappear, there is a widening of the area of conditions on which sympathy can dwell not with distracting pain, but with bracing pleasure: and the range and efficiency of our sympathy will be enlarged concurrently with this process, and again will in its turn accelerate it.

"And now," continued Mr. Brock, "to bring matters to a conclusion, let us consider the final truth—the last word of science—which emerges from the foregoing facts. In proportion as conduct becomes completely moralised, morality, in the old sense of the word, which implied a struggle, or self-conquest, disappears—partly because the altruistic pleasures become so strong that the opposing egoistic pleasures cease, in comparison with them, to be pleasurable: and partly for the farther reason that, in proportion as social conduct ameliorates social conditions, the pity, the self-sacrifices, the lives of devoted work, which we now justly admire as conducive to social progress, will necessarily disappear, because there will be no place for them. How shall pity survive when no one is any longer pitiable? When sickness and penury cease to exist amongst us, what room will there be for knight-errantry on behalf of the sick and poor?

"In other words, as my friend and illustrious colleague, Mr. Herbert Spencer, has shown, in his great work on *Ethics*—though he has not expressly stated it—morality, as supernaturalists understand the word, is not an end in itself; still less is it a perfection in itself. It is, on the contrary, a sign and incident of imperfection. It is the effort of a mal-adjusted mind in a mal-adjusted society to render the adjustments of both as complete as the circumstances will permit; and all the self-denials, the heroisms, the struggles, the agonisings, and so forth, out of which many foolish thinkers would endeavour to construct a religion—as if pain and struggle in themselves were ever anything else but undesirable—are in reality comparable to the pains of a child cutting its teeth. When the set of teeth is complete the pains of teething are forgotten. That," said Mr. Brock, smiling, "is the last word of science, and so, on the present occasion, it may be mine also."

A silence followed this abrupt, and perhaps unexpected conclusion, which might have been embarrassing if it had not been broken by Lady Snowdon.

"But, my dear Mr. Brock," she said, "may I be permitted to remind you, since you so kindly direct your remarks to us poor women, that you've only done half of what we had hoped you would do? You haven't, till just now, said a single word about religion."

"Religion?" said Mr. Brock, a little taken aback. "Yes, yes. Well, religion's a large subject. Would you like me to deal with its origin in dreams and the worship of ancestors, or trace the evolution of priestly castes and ceremonial?"

"No," said Lady Snowdon, "no. We hoped you

would tell us something about religion as it affects ourselves, or doesn't affect ourselves—whichever the case may be."

"In that respect," said Mr. Brock graciously, "I have surely dealt with it already in showing you that morality is independent of all religious belief. For the rest, religion, as it affects ourselves to-day, has doubtless a vast importance. I have stated this in not a few of my works. It consists—I hope I make myself clear—of a consciousness of two things: first, our own ignorance of the substance or the general meaning of the Universe; and secondly, the profound significance of the completely evolved social organism, which, as my friend Mr. Spencer justly remarks, religion tells us has not arisen for nothing. The time is too far advanced—I must, I fear, be returning shortly—and my throat is too much fatigued to permit of my entering on a more detailed exposition of the matter. I will content myself with saying that religion, so long as we resolutely refuse to associate it with an assent to any moral or theological propositions and experience it only in the form of heightened and enlarged seriousness, may to many natures do great good, and can probably do harm to none."

CHAPTER III

WHATEVER was the general effect of Mr. Brock's exposition, the effect of the latter part of it on one of his auditors was remarkable. This auditor was Mr. Brompton. His face, which at first had worn an air of pride, as though Mr. Brock were a kind of colossal bear, dancing to a tune which Mr. Brompton had hummed to him, gradually clouded over. He shuffled with his feet; he frequently said "Pooh" and "Pah"; and finally, drumming on his knees with a set of impatient fingers, he had turned away from the speaker and stared indignantly at the sea.

"I'm afraid," said Lady Snowdon suavely to him when Mr. Brock had departed, "that you're not feeling quite well. I trust it is nothing serious."

"Not well?" exclaimed Mr. Brompton. "No. I'm sick with disgust at what this sophist—this—this ignorant wind-bag has been saying. Only wait till this evening, when, as you have all promised, I shall be allowed to finish my own account of the matter. I rather think that then I shall hoist him with his own petard."

"I admire your self-restraint," said Lady Snowdon. "It is kinder, as well as easier, to destroy him when he is not present."

Mr. Brompton remained moody. He was still moody at dinner. The rest of the party, on the

other hand, seemed inclined to indulge in an excess of levity as a sort of relief after the bondage of Mr. Brock's superhuman seriousness.

"I think," said Mrs. Vernon, having mentioned the receipt of a letter which contained a list of the co-respondents in the case of which Mrs. Majendie was the heroine, "I think that Molly's condition would satisfy Mr. Brock himself. Her moralisation has become so complete that her morality has ceased to exist."

"Quite so," said Lord Restormel. "She identifies her own happiness with the happiness of the greatest number, and feels no effort in doing so—no conflict of principles. Envable woman!"

"Yes," said Mr. Brompton grimly, "laugh at him! Yes—laugh at him. It's all he deserves, and presently I'll pick him to pieces." Indeed, Mr. Brompton's impatience to begin this process was such that the two sexes had, the weather being now fine again, hardly reunited in the portico when dinner was over, before he himself pushed the chairs into the position which he deemed most suitable, and hustled Mr. Hancock into opening the proceedings instantly.

"Come, then," said Mr. Hancock, "to put the matter into a nut-shell, we saw last night that science—which is simply another word for organised modern knowledge—is a complete solvent of any form of religion which consists of a moral communion between the individual human being and the Universe. This morning Mr. Brompton has, in fulfilment of his promise, been trying to show us that what we cannot find in the Universe we can find in Humanity, which surrounds and shelters us with a smaller cocoon-like Universe of its own, and

practically gives us back our anthropocentric and geocentric system. That, as the elder Mr. Weller said, was 'all very capital'; but in the middle of these glad tidings, Mr. Brock, whom Mr. Brompton—it would seem with some want of caution—had commended to our confidence as an Aquinas of the Ethical Church, has taken these tidings, and has, with a sublime indifference, deprived them of every element which Mr. Brompton prizes. Mr. Brompton now proposes to make this damage good. Mr. Brompton, we are all attention."

Mr. Brompton leapt to his feet. "Let me," he said, "speak standing. Illogical, unimaginative, stolid, bloodless lump of learning as he is, I won't say a word against Mr. Brock's distinguished character. I'll only show you how ridiculously—how childishly, he's in the wrong—how he gives you the play of *Hamlet* with the part of Hamlet left out. He says that the human race, owing to natural causes, is undergoing a process of moralisation. So far he's right; but then he jumps from this to the wretched and absurd conclusion that the tendency of this grand process is, forsooth, to exhaust itself, and make moral struggle, moral enthusiasm, virtue itself, obsolete. I'm not going to waste breath, however, on denouncing his error. I'm going to expose it. Well, Mr. Brock's contemptible error is this. He says, and truly, that the process of moralisation is going on; but when he tries to account for it, he gives us only the secondary cause, and leaves out—out altogether—the vital, the dynamic principle, which alone makes it possible. According to Mr. Brock, this process of moralisation depends, if you please, simply on the development of two instincts—a distaste for the idea of punishment and a taste for

ethical acts, which arises from a feeling that it's nice for everybody to be happy all round. Now if we take that answer as it stands, it's nonsense—sheer nonsense; and I'll tell you why. To make any such moral progress as that which Mr. Brock describes, we want more than an enlarged good-nature and a growing disinclination to crime. We want enthusiasm—that's what we want. We want a conquering and lifting determination, to sustain us in our constant struggle; and if you haven't got this, then good-bye to the remoralisation on which Mr. Brock counts. You will not, I am sure, if I speak of Christian martyrs, accuse me of undue partiality for the tenets for which they died; but we see in their deaths types of ethical victory. Now, the martyrs would never have died for the sake of a few propositions if these had not been associated with some ideal which mastered their imaginations—which lifted, which touched their hearts."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "that's perfectly true."

"Well, then," continued Mr. Brompton, "each of these ethical acts, which in the course of a few thousand years will, according to Mr. Brock, have become instinctive by repetition, has, meanwhile, the nature of a diluted martyrdom. It represents an overcoming of resistance, and each, in its own degree, requires, like an act of martyrdom, in order to make it possible, some certain equivalent to the martyr's love of his Mas——" Mr. Brompton was going to have said, "the martyr's love of his Master," but thinking that the phrase might savour of the hated clericalism which he had escaped from, "I mean," he continued, correcting himself, "the martyr's longing for the baubles of the New Jerusalem. And the ethical equivalent to this is the all-pervading love

of Humanity, which, like a spark of spiritual electricity, is present even now in each effort of the will subconsciously, and which it is the aim of our ethical religion to make present consciously. But," said Mr. Brompton, pausing, looking round him, and panting a little as though with suppressed feeling, "if I allowed myself to launch out extempore into this subject, I should weary you. I should also fail to do my own meaning justice. May I then ask you"—here Mr. Brompton approached the lamp on Mr. Hancock's table, and the rustle was heard of some paper which he extracted from his waistcoat-pocket—"may I ask you to listen to a passage from one of my own sermons, in which I showed how, by a mere dwelling on sociological facts, we find that the thought of Humanity does actually rouse in us the desiderated feeling in question—nay, and further, how this feeling, though we many of us may not recognise it, is, as a grand fact, operative in all of us even now, whether we will or no—ay, always in our very heart of hearts? Well, what I said was this. You might have heard a pin drop when I delivered the passage to my congregation. A hard Indian colonel and a titled lady of the world were in tears. 'We may,' I said, 'predicate, with literal truth, of Humanity the two main things which Christian and theistic superstition has predicated of its imaginary God. In the first place, Humanity dwells in *us*, for our thoughts and bodies are made by it; and in the second place, *we* dwell in *it*. That we are dwelling in it is, by this time, a social truism; but that *it* is dwelling in *us*, this is a truth, a religio-scientific revelation, which it is the mission of the Ethical Church to vivify in the consciousness of you all. Represent to yourselves, with the aid

of science, the unity of Humanity as an organism, and each of you, as a member of it, will be enlarged into its corporate life. You will look back on its early days—on its bursting from the husk of animalism. You will feel as though science had created a new memory for you—your nostrils will taste the freshness of the early morning of the world. You will thrill with thoughts of your race as it was in its eager adolescence, when, step by step, subduing this stubborn world to its uses. Your consciousness of its life will grow still more crowded and beautiful, as your social memory brings you nearer to our own times. Thoughts, affections, imaginations, the creative efforts of art, intellectual and political movements, will make a movement in your own minds, like the shuttle of Goethe's *Erdgeist*, or a dance of electric sparks, or the racings of your own blood. And then turn to the future. Quicker and ever quicker the shining shuttle glances. More thrillingly, more rapidly, more perfectly, are the feelings and lives of others, distant or not yet born, made parts of your own being. Our individual existence is thus trebly expanded. It reaches back to the beginning of things, with gratitude to those that have gone before us, and who thus in our memories of them actually live immortal. It reaches forward to those in the future whose lives shall be more full than ours, and who in their turn shall make us immortal by remembering us, giving us plaster busts perchance on the walls of ethical churches, which the faithful will look at, at all events, once a week. That's one process, but there's another, which is its converse, and this converse process is one which, to us, perhaps, is of most direct importance. Just as the individual mind expands

itself till it is lost in Humanity, so also does it draw the whole of Humanity into itself. The joys of others become more than our own joys, the sorrows of others rouse in us a more poignant solicitude than any which could, as a simple sociological fact, be excited in us by any pains of our own."

Mr. Brompton was here interrupted by a servant's voice at his elbow, saying, "Telegram for you, sir."

"Will you allow me?" said Mr. Brompton to the company, with an almost condescending politeness. "You're highly civilised, Mr. Glanville, in these parts, getting telegrams at this hour."

"They are sent by telephone," said Glanville, "if they come after eight o'clock, from a house of one of my agents, ten or twelve miles away."

But Mr. Brompton apparently heard nothing. His face was as white as a sheet, and his hand shook as it held the missive he was staring at. Glanville, who was near him, saw that something was wrong; and, in order to screen him from the observation of the company, rose, and standing close to him, asked with a careless air if he wished to send an answer; "because," he said, "the people go to bed at eleven. I hope," he added, lowering his voice, "you haven't had bad news."

Mr. Brompton was too much overcome even to affect the virtue of reticence. "It's nothing," he said, "except that I and my wife have lost, if this news is true, every single penny we possess. You can read—yes, read. It's the Clyde Banking Company—smashed—smashed—every single sixpence gone."

Mr. Brompton spoke so loud that his news was soon public property; and a decorous expression of sympathy proceeded from the party generally.

Glanville, meanwhile, had been looking at the fatal telegram. "Failure," he read, half aloud, "Clyde Banking Company—bonds missing—if that is the concern in which you held shares hope you have parted with them."

"Would you mind," said Mr. Hancock, "letting me see that telegram?" And he almost snatched it out of Glanville's hands as he spoke. Mr. Brompton eyed him apathetically, too miserable to be curious. He started, however, a moment later, and some life returned to his face, when Mr. Hancock exclaimed, with a ringing laugh, "I'll tell you what it all is. I knew, Mr. Brompton, you'd some interest in the Clyde Banking Company; but this is the Clydebank Company, about which I happen to have heard a thing or two. It's a building society—you know the sort of thing. It's been a bit shaky—I've heard that for a year or two. If it's gone, I can tell you this—half the small investors in the West of Scotland will be ruined. Yes—yes—I'm right. It's not 'bonds missing.' It's 'Bond missing.' Bond was the managing director, and as arrant a humbug as ever sang psalms in a kirk. My dear Mr. Brompton, I'm sorry you've had this alarm. Allow me to congratulate you on the discovery that it is quite groundless."

Mr. Brompton, meanwhile, had been more or less recovering himself, but one of his hands was pressed violently against his heart; and he seemed to experience some difficulty in speaking. At last he took the telegram, read it over again; and then, having drawn a deep breath through his nostrils, sat up, and, with a smile, found his voice again.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "for this unlucky mistake. A moment ago I thought I was completely

ruined. It was all a blunder on the part of a kind cousin of mine—but a rather officious cousin. Forgive me—I beg—all of you ; and please forget the incident. Let me see—where were we? Had I finished? I can't remember."

"You had just pointed out to us," said Glanville, "that the ethical religion substituted in the hearts of each of us——"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Brompton hastily. "I remember. I had practically finished." Mr. Brompton's face, which a moment ago had been white, had become by this time an equally unnatural red. The words "small investors" had begun to drum in his ears; and his mind, by what Mr. Brock called a process of re-representation, was making, on behalf of others, a number of vulgar comments on the oddly unethical, but still solid satisfaction, which he drew from the thought that these financial calamities had fallen on a remote portion of the sublime body of Humanity. "On the whole," he continued, "I think I won't try to say more. My statement is really complete; and I'm thinking now," he exclaimed, as a flash of inspiration came to him, "of all those other poor people. I feel somehow as if I'd been saved at their expense. Shocking—shocking—shocking! I must have a collection for them—ay, I must do that—as soon as I return to London. And meanwhile, Mr. Glanville, if it isn't too late to do so, I'll just send off a wire to assure myself that we're not mistaken."

When Mr. Brompton had disappeared through the drawing-room, closing the door with a bang, which in itself bore witness to the extremity of his relief and his excitement, the rest of the party were overcome by an irresistible disposition to laugh.

Mr. Hancock's laugh was loud. His companions were more restrained; but such was the effort on their part required to control their muscles that anything like sober speech was for some minutes impossible. At last Mr. Hancock, as an atonement for his own outburst, recovered enough voice to make the semi-serious observation that of all forms of immortality ever offered to man, the subjective kind, dependent on the memory of our descendants, was not only the least tempting, but also the most precarious.

"I," said Lord Restormel from the depths of a low chair, "have been forgotten before my death by so many delightful women that I don't expect to be remembered by many men after it."

"Come," said Glanville, "I think Mr. Hancock's mirth must be taken as equal to a declaration that our conference for to-night is ended. Miss Leighton—I know you sing. Will you celebrate the Religion of Humanity, according to Mr. Brompton's own practice, by giving us something from the works of some non-theistic writer?"

Miss Leighton rose, and, followed by the rest of the party, she and Glanville went together into the drawing-room. The piano was opened. Her touch was soft and exquisite. She ran her fingers over the keys, half laughing. "Do you know this?" she said presently, her words moving to the music; and then, in a voice like the low notes of a violoncello, she gave to the words of an ordinary composer's song, a passion that held her listeners by a kind of troubling spell.

"What did you crave for—the worst or the best of me—

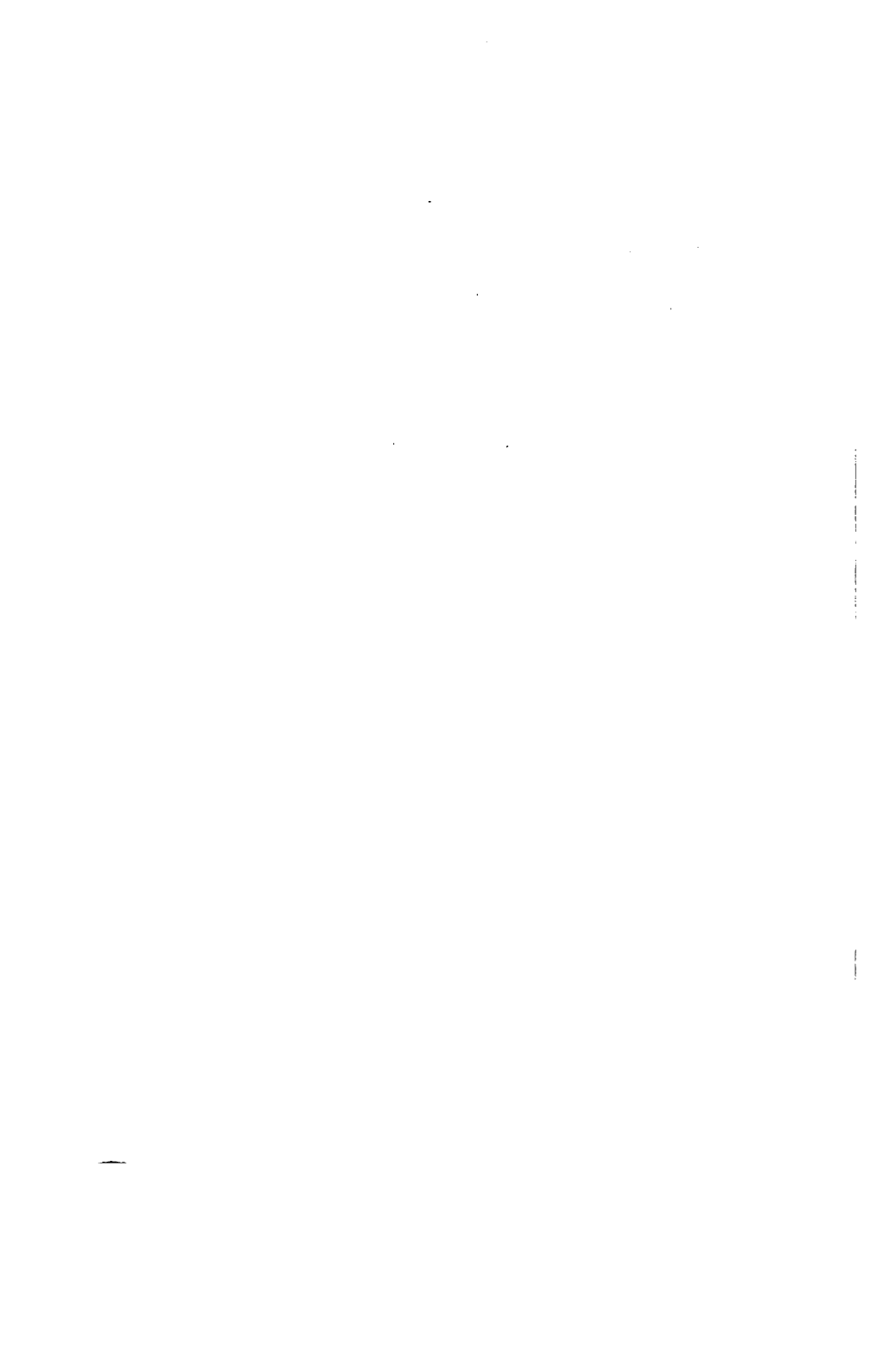
There by the sea at the evening's close,

Love, when you held me, and took from the breast of me

Only the petals of one poor rose?

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What did I give to you? What did I bring to you
There by the sea when the wind was chill?
Love, was it only a hand that would cling to you—
Only a face to be yours at will?
This did I bring to you—last of me, first of me,
There by the sea when the light was low—
Body and soul of me—best of me, worst of me.
Love, you have taken me all, and know.
What have you left to me? How do I deem of you,
Here by the sea, when the night is come?
How shall I answer? Your lips, when I dream of you,
Still are on mine, love, and mine are dumb."



BOOK VII
TOWARDS MORNING

CHAPTER I

THE unphilosophic mood which had stolen over the whole party, in consequence of the unfortunate illustration given by Mr. Brompton of the practical workings of the vital principles of his Church, prevailed more or less at breakfast the following day. Mr. Brompton himself was almost entirely silent, being conscious, against his will, that the mere fact of his presence was provocative of a general inclination, which was civilly repressed, to smile. Indeed, he enriched the conversation only by the grave and interesting announcement that it would probably be necessary for him to return ere long to London, in order to open a subscription for the sufferers from the late disaster. The others, meanwhile, were indulging in scraps of that personal talk, which, according to Mr. Brock, represented the extremity of human degradation.

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon of somebody, "no doubt she was naturally witty, but she's been spoilt by living amongst a little set of admirers who, whenever she opened her mouth, said, 'Listen to Mary's last'—till the poor girl, if she could, would have tried to blow her nose in an epigram."

"It's such a pity," said Miss Leighton. "As a child she was always surprising me, without the least intending it, because she said what bubbled up

in her mind. But the people who try to be original are worse than the people who can't be."

"Now there," said Lord Restormel, "was the charm of our late ambassador at Berlin. His thoughts formed themselves into wit as salt forms itself into crystals, by a process of which he knew nothing; and his phrases crystallised in exactly the same way, except when, as they very often did, they seemed rather to sparkle as champagne does in the act of being poured out of the bottle."

"Exactly," said Mr. Hancock, anxious not to be left out in the cold. "He was spontaneous—that's what he was—like all great orators—all great debaters——"

"And also," said Lord Restormel, "like all great thinkers and novelists. Each thought, each incident, we should find, if we looked into their minds narrowly, surprised them, was thrust into their minds as if it were not their own. By the way, my dear Rupert, has this ever occurred to you, that one of the reasons why the heroes of even the greatest novels, like the Wilhelm of Goethe, or the Waverley of Sir Walter Scott, are so apt to be wanting in any definite character, is the fact that they are not, for the author, real people at all, but merely points of view from which all the other characters are drawn? Or we may call them, in each case, a pair of typical eyes, which every reader of the novel is invited to adopt as his own."

"I should say," replied Glanville, "that the reader is not only invited to do this, but obliged to do so: just as a man who looks at a picture is obliged to look at it from the painter's point of perspective. Of course, some novels are not written from the hero's point of view at all—*Don Quixote*, for instance. But

it's written from a point of view which is so far definite that, at all events, it is not Don Quixote's."

"And women's novels," said Miss Leighton, "or most of them, are written from the woman's point of view, as opposed deliberately to the man's. That's what makes them so stupid."

Lord Restormel, who was sitting by Miss Leighton, laid a hand on her shoulder, from which she adroitly disengaged herself. "I'm inclined," he said, "to address you as Holofernes addressed Judith: 'Thou art both beautiful in thy countenance and witty in thy words.' Let you and me and Mr. Glanville continue our discussion in the garden—shall we say at twelve o'clock?—as soon as I've got through some letters that must be written. Come, Rupert, where shall we three meet again? By the fountain where the Naiad, as she bends over the brimming basin, seems to be so abashed by the beauty of her own reflection that she's always trying to obliterate it with a shower from her marble watering-pot?"

"Certainly," said Glanville, looking up as though his thoughts had been wandering. "Certainly. There's a great deal more in all this than either of you, perhaps, realise. If Miss Leighton will be ready at twelve, I'll guide her and introduce her to the Naiad, and if you're not ready to come with us, we'll wait patiently for you there, and Miss Leighton shall say to me all those charming things about your poetry which even the sincerity of her admiration won't let her say to you."

Lord Restormel, whose arrears of correspondence were really large and pressing, was, though not pleased with this arrangement, nevertheless, obliged to submit to it; and Miss Leighton, who preferred the society of the opposite sex to her own, had, in

order to avoid the possibility of any female companionship, judiciously asked Glanville's permission to come to him in his own study as soon as the time for the proposed reunion should arrive. When twelve o'clock struck the door of his study opened, and there she appeared before him—a remarkably punctual vision—in a hat whose pink lining threw a flush over her pale cheeks, whilst a sparkle of expectation gave light to the soft sullenness of her eyes, and a smile hovered on her lips like a primrose presaging spring.

"Come," said Glanville, whose hat and stick were beside him. "If we go out of the window I think we shall meet nobody. How well you are looking! When I saw you last week at the station, I little thought that to-day I should be going to discuss life and death with you."

"My impression," said Miss Leighton, when they found themselves in a walk hidden by laurels, "my impression was that we were going to discuss the novels of men and women, or was it the merits and the demerits of forced wit and spontaneous wit?"

"Perhaps it was all these," said Glanville, "and life and death as well. And now, do me a favour. I'll tell you why I ask it presently. Don't say a word till we get to the Naiad and the fountain."

Miss Leighton, who always rose to any occasion, however unexpected, smiled, nodded, and walked on in silent and self-possessed abstraction. At length they arrived at a rock-walled hollow in a dell, where the marble figure of a female, whose clothes were a little moss and some weather-stains, bent over an artificial pool with her hand on an iron tap, which allowed a small volume of water either to spill itself

from the lips of an urn, or rise from the bottom of the pool in a tumult of shining bubbles.

"I suppose," said Miss Leighton, as they seated themselves on the edge of the marble basin, "I'm at liberty to speak now; and I'm going to use my liberty to tell you that I think you're a very odd man."

"I'm going to use mine," said Glanville, "to ask you what you've been thinking about. Don't answer me in a hurry. Think before you speak."

"Well," said Miss Leighton, slowly drawing off a white glove, so that she might dip a hand equally white into the water, and looking as she did so at the uprush of bubbles beneath the surface, "I thought of all sorts of things—near things—things far away. A rose bush which we passed set me thinking of the garden of a villa near Nice; and the smell of your cigar—well, I won't tell you what that did. And then I thought of our own chapel at home, about which I told you, and the services, and all that; and then—to tell you the truth—just now, when you spoke to me, I believe I was half thinking about a boot-shop in Bond Street. Thoughts seem to bubble up in one's mind like the bubbles in this fountain, without our knowing whence or why. Look how the bubbles rise—dancing—bursting—jostling one another! But who knows where they come from? Not this little pool of water, which they seem to fill with life."

"That," said Glanville, "is a very good illustration. I suppose you'd apply it also to the brilliancy of spontaneous wit—the charm of originality—and so on."

"Yes," said Miss Leighton. "I suppose so—yes—certainly—certainly."

"Well," said Glanville, "I have surprised you into a perception of something which any of us can see when once our attention is called to it, but which most people never notice. You have realised with regard to the ideas of the brilliant talker, and those also which occupy our minds when we are doing, as we say, nothing in particular, that they don't come to us by means of any process over which we have any control. They circulate into our consciousness like the corpuscles of a mental blood, or they gush up into it—to use your own more agreeable image—like the bubbles in this basin, from an outside source. This uprush of sparkling water into which you are now dipping your hand had its birth far off amongst the mists and the gorse of the moorland. Many of our thoughts, too, have origins no less distant. But what I want to say is, that this, which you see to be true with regard to your own reveries, and the wit of a brilliant talker, is equally true of every process that goes on in our minds. The utmost we can imagine ourselves doing—even if we suppose ourselves to have free-will—is just what a fireman does by means of his hose and nozzle—namely, to squirt or turn, in this or that direction, the living waters whose force proceeds from our wills no more than the force of a mill-stream proceeds from the miller who uses it. The next time you listen to anyone who is talking brilliantly notice the rapidity with which his various ideas connect themselves—the similes, the analogies, which have formed themselves like dew-drops running together, and which surprise the speaker himself almost as much as his listeners."

"I begin to feel," said Miss Leighton, "that my life is a mere kaleidoscope, which is only mine because

I can see into it, whilst something that's not me shakes it."

"Yes," said Glanville, "this is the conclusion to which all science leads us."

"Your science," said Miss Leighton, "is a doubtful blessing, after all. It finds us, like Job, coming into the world naked; it watches us clothe ourselves with all sorts of wrong belief; it then strips the clothing off us; and it leaves us at last more forlorn than we were originally, because the clothes we have worn for so long have unfitted us for life without them. It seems almost incredible that things really can be what you say they are."

"I agree with you," said Glanville. "But I don't myself say that things are really as science represents them. When I take into account my nature and my feelings as a whole, the scientific conception of existence seems as unbelievable as the religious conception, and I feel myself beaten to and fro by the battledores of two opposite falsehoods. But there's one thing I won't do, and there's one thing which it's idle to try to do, and this is to elude the destructive operations of science by pretending for a moment that they are less destructive than they are. Let them do their utmost; let them do their worst; and then, when we have realised how they reduce all life to an absurdity, we may be able to convince ourselves, not that they are not true, but that they're only one half of truth, of which the other half must be sought elsewhere. Ah, here comes our Viceroy. Now, my dear Restormel, here is a lady who is waiting to hear you resume your discourse about novels and points of view; and I'm waiting also, for a reason I'll tell you presently."

Lord Restormel turned to Miss Leighton with

dreamy and inquiring eyes, and seated himself as near as he could to her without wetting his coat. "What was I saying about novels?" he asked in a tone which seemed to unite the interesting devotion of a lover with the interesting abstraction of a genius. "Ah!" he continued, "to be sure; we were talking about points of view."

"Yes," said Miss Leighton; "and I want you to tell me this: Why need a novel be written from any point of view at all? Why can't it be a reproduction of life, which anyone may look at from any point of view he chooses?"

"Every art," said Lord Restormel, "has its own special limitations. A sculptor, no doubt, can reproduce a human figure so that anyone can choose the point from which he will look at it; but the sculptor can reproduce one attitude, one expression, one moment only; and his figures are torn from the surroundings which in life would naturally be theirs. The painter gives them their surroundings, but he cannot give them their solidity. He can represent them, that is to say, from one point of view only, namely, that which he occupies when he is painting them; and the same thing is true of the novelist. A woman, in writing, may—though she doesn't very often do it—make her point of view sexless by an act of mental detachment; but she writes from a special point of view none the less; and by all the laws of literary or mental perspective this point of view is bound for the time to be her reader's. Let us take the simplest example—a novelist's description of a landscape: 'Far away in the distance was a line of purple hills, which sank on the left into a tract of desolate moorland, and rose on the right into mountains capped with cloud. Most of the intervening

country was, however, hidden from sight by the wall which bordered the road, or some shoulders of rock beyond it.' Or take, again, the well-known kind of beginning common to a class of novels which were in their own day popular: 'On a dark autumn evening, in the year 1730, three horsemen might have been seen emerging from a wood which seemed, in the uncertain light, to be of no inconsiderable extent.' Well, all this might have been written by a woman just as well as by a man; but in each case you have the ideal spectator looking at what is described from some particular position. The horsemen might have been seen. Yes—by somebody who was there to see them. The wood seemed large in the twilight. Yes—to the eyes of this same somebody. The blue hills are distant. Distant from what? From somebody who stands on some given imaginary spot; and it is to the left of this somebody that they do one thing and to his right that they do another."

"I see," said Miss Leighton. "But this supposed somebody, in these cases you mention, is at all events not the hero or the heroine, for neither of them has been yet introduced."

"No," said Lord Restormel. "Only in an autobiography is the point of perspective that of one person throughout. In a novel which has the form of letters there are as many points of perspective as there are correspondents; and in a novel whose form is that of an ordinary narrative, though the point of perspective for the most part is that of the principal character, other points also are being constantly adopted and abandoned, as occasion requires. The same thing, I believe, happens in the painting of very large pictures."

"Yes, yes," said Miss Leighton; "I grasp the

whole thing now ; but while you've been explaining it, I've been unintentionally committing an infidelity. My thoughts have been wandering from you to another man, and to something which that man told me."

"Who," said Lord Restormel, "is my rival? Let me know at once, that I may kill him."

"There he is," said Miss Leighton, pointing to Glanville. "But spare him for my sake—at least till he's satisfied my curiosity ; for he told me that this charming discussion about the art of the novelist would somehow help us to unriddle the mystery of life and death. He will have to save his head by a new Arabian Night."

"Well," said Glanville, "the moral of what you two have been saying is this: It is impossible for a novelist to describe anything, unless he describes it in terms of the impression which it makes on some particular person occupying a particular position in point of time and place. Distant hills, an advancing figure, hidden or visible features, an unknown road, a person with an unknown past—apart from an ideal spectator's view—none of this means anything. And now, my dear Restormel, what I want to point out to Miss Leighton is that this which is true of objects as described in novels is equally true of all the actual objects round us. Apart from the effects produced by the Universe on ourselves, the Universe would be nothing but an unthinkable mystery. It is a mystery even so ; and out of it, as I was telling Miss Leighton—for before your arrival I was giving her a lesson myself—all our ideas and hopes, and desires, and energies bubble up into our consciousness like the water of this bubbling spring—our consciousness, which, so far as science can tell us anything, is

nothing but a bubble itself. I thought it might not be amiss, during the present lull in our disputations, to go over a lesson once more—or the least familiar part of it—which we learnt together the night before last, and which, if we can't get round it, makes a clean sweep of everything which men have till now found valuable. I hope that by-and-by you will neither of you be indisposed to listen to me, for I shall try to point out how such a getting round may be possible—some day, if not to-day.”

CHAPTER II

GLANVILLE, when luncheon began, informed the rest of his friends of the manner in which he, Miss Leighton, and Lord Restormel had been stealing a philosophical march on them, or rather, to speak more correctly, had been examining some of the dead who lay on their former battlefield. The reception which his news met with showed that a general desire was once more springing up for a renewal of their suspended argument; and this, in the middle of the meal, was quickened by an unexpected incident. An excellent omelette had come, been enjoyed, and gone, when Mr. Brompton, whose absence had excited no remark, entered the room with a step and face so solemn that everybody thought for the moment that he must have been ruined in good earnest after all. But a second glance at him conveyed a reassuring impression that the faith which shone in his eyes could never co-exist with ruin.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Glanville," he said, with a lofty and half-absent mournfulness, "that I couldn't find you before. You won't think me abrupt, discourteous—I sincerely hope not—will you, if I tell you that I must be going instantly? I've been at the telegraph ever since ten o'clock. It's business," he continued, so attenuating his voice that it seemed to be conveying a confidence and making a proclama-

tion simultaneously, "business connected with that sorrow of which we heard last evening."

"Good heavens!" said Glanville. "But when do you propose to start?"

"In ten minutes," said Mr. Brompton. "I telegraphed overnight to your agent, that an Irish car should be sent for me on the chance of my departure being inevitable. The car is here. My things are already on it. I have," he said, taking his seat, "just ten minutes to spare."

The obviousness of the fact that Mr. Brompton's departure was certain was a signal for the expression of many warm regrets that it was necessary. Glanville even ventured on a suggestion that if Mr. Brompton's business were connected with the opening of a subscription for the victims of the Clydebank failure, it would be well to wait for a few farther particulars.

Mr. Brompton by this time had risen. "Ah," he said, in a voice full of suppressed feeling, which gave to his departure almost the air of an apotheosis, "that's not the way with us. With us the heart speaks first, the chartered accountant afterwards."

Mr. Brompton's exit seemed somehow to clear the air; and when Glanville came back to the dining-room after speeding the parting guest, he found him already a member of the "choir invisible" who had entered on a future life in the memorial laughter of his friends. Such was the way in which the situation was described by Mr. Hancock; and Lady Snowdon added a farther touch to it by drily saying, "It seems to be hardly fair that he should have a present life and a future life at once; though perhaps in his immortal state one can appreciate him even better than in the mortal."

"Poor man!" said Glanville. "In the silliest things he said to us he did but repeat the nonsense of wiser men than he. Comte, Emerson, and the rest—all our modern religion-mongers—are merely so many Mr. Bromptons under rather more impressive masks. All try to make five by adding together two and two; only men like Emerson manage to blot their figures, and try to think that a smudge is as good as the missing unit."

"Do you really," said Lady Snowdon, "bracket Mr. Brompton with Emerson?"

"I do," said Glanville. "These men are none of them fools. Don't think I mean that. Mr. Brompton, in many ways, is quite as shrewd as most of us. But they're all of them men who are trying, by the same sort of system, to break, at roulette, a bank which is unbreakable. Emerson may have played in gold; but he lost it like so much silver. I won't, however, inflict any more of this on you now. By-and-by, if you like, I can put it to you all, more plainly."

"Yes," said Lady Snowdon. "That's just what we're all looking forward to. At present you seem to have left us in a very bad way indeed. We began our conferences with the obsequies of Christian orthodoxy, which were certainly conducted without the benefit of clergy. We then turned to nature and science, and we found—I think we found, Mr. Glanville, didn't we?—that science deprives us not only of our souls, but of ourselves. Then to our surprise we were told that it offered to give back to us both our virtues and religion in new and superior forms. There was some satisfaction in that; but now it appears that these offers have only been made in order to be snatched away from us—that

our new progressive morality is a progress towards the instinct of bees ; and that our new religion is merely a painted toy, which tumbles to pieces the moment we begin to play with it. As to that, we all think you are right. Still, the fact remains that we've found you a sort of Balaam, who, instead of blessing us, curses us in an increasingly comprehensive way. You have at present done nothing but pull down. You have promised to try your own hand at building up. When do you propose to begin?"

"I'll begin," said Glanville, "whenever you are willing to listen to me. I will only put first one question to all of you. You say that thus far I've done nothing but assist at the unbuilding of everything. I want you to tell me if you think we have unbuilt enough. For till the unbuilding is complete—till the city is a ploughed field—I won't attempt the laying of one of my own stones."

"I'm sure," said Lady Snowdon, "you've left us sufficiently destitute. We should like a little restitution, were it merely for the sake of change."

"I shall first have to make you," said Glanville, "more destitute still ; and then we will see what happens as soon as I have done that. Well, shall we say half-past three in the garden?"

The proposal proved welcome to everyone, and matters were so arranged.

CHAPTER III

THE hour and the garden found the company punctual. The sun shone; the air was as warm as ever again; and in case the rain of yesterday should have left any dampness in the ground, gaily-coloured oriental rugs had been placed beneath the group of chairs.

Mr. Hancock was as brisk as usual, and even more than usually interested, for his own position, and his doctrine of the working hypothesis was, he had so gathered, to come in for some discussion.

"This afternoon," he began, "my own task will be short. It is simply to mention different sides of our subject with which Glanville will deal, and the order in which he proposes to take them. He will first sum up very briefly the conclusions we have reached already with regard to the ways in which science, as a body of connected knowledge, dissolves all forms of religion known to the world hitherto. He will next glance at the futile attempts that have been made to extract from science itself a substitute for what science has destroyed. He will then turn from religion, as an isolated element in life—as an affair of prayers, and conscious communion with the divine—and, considering it in its relation to human life as a whole, he will seek to show you that if this element is expelled, it will take with it not only itself, but many other things besides, with which

most people do not regard it as having any connection. Then, when he has shown you what human life would be like, if this exodus of religion were final, he proposes, from the picture which he will offer you, to draw conclusions which we will wait to criticise till we hear them."

"May I," interposed Seaton, "make an objection first? I won't interfere with Mr. Glanville. I only want to state a fact."

"Come, come," said Mr. Hancock, "we know what you philosophers are. I hope you're not going to take us back into the world of visions and ecstasies. We must keep to our point, else we shall arrive nowhere."

"What I want to say," replied Seaton, "is strictly to the point. It's this: You talk of religion being destroyed. You speak as if, temporarily at all events, it were destroyed now. I want to say—as I said to Mr. Glanville the morning after my arrival—that this simply is not the case. The religious impulse—religious faith, if you like it—was never more active in the world than it is to-day. Its only difficulty is the difficulty which it finds in discovering modes of thought and conduct, open to ordinary men, which can express even half its fulness. Take, for instance, the doctrine of human equality. Most of those who accept it think that they accept it as an obvious scientific truth. It is nothing of the kind. It is in flat contradiction to everything that science teaches us. It is in reality a doctrine of the purest religious mysticism, which for science is nothing but a stumbling-block and a rock of offence. Take again those countless philanthropic movements which aim at alleviating the physical sufferings of the weak. The religious ideal is really what inspires all of them.

They are religious passion finding its vent in action. I want to say that you ought to recognise this ; or else your arguments will be only half complete."

"I am," said Glanville, "so far from forgetting this that it is the very thing which I all along assume, though perhaps you put it in rather an exaggerated way. It is also the very thing on what I am presently going to insist. The peculiar feature of the world at the present time is not that it is wanting in the religious impulse, but that this impulse can now no longer, as it once could, connect itself intellectually with any scheme of existence which the intellect will permit us to accept. As for philanthropy, that, taken by itself, is a refuge from doubt, rather than an expression of belief. Let me show you what I mean. No one could have told us more plainly than you that life culminates in religion. And what did you say religion was? All religion is an approach, you said, though only with the few an attaining, to some mysterious condition of personal union with the divine, of which you must not forget that you have given us ecstasy as the type. Ecstasy—this aperture giving access to the Supreme Mind—you described very well as the open top to a chimney, without which no spiritual draught would be possible. Such being the case, philanthropy, if really religious, must recognise its immediate aims as merely a half-way house. When it aims at feeding the hungry, it does not merely wish to feed them. It wishes to support them as beings who may come to be religious also: but of what their religion is to be, philanthropy tells us nothing. We should be no nearer to solving the religious difficulties of to-day—the difficulties which throughout our discussions have occupied you and all of us—if we

stuffed every beggar in the world with bacon and plum-pudding."

"Wouldn't it be simpler," said Lord Restormel, "if we suppose that the aim of philanthropy is to warm the poor, not to feed them? No distribution of coals and blankets in January could ever make warmth so general as the weather makes it in June: yet I never heard of summer as a substitute for religious effort."

"I hope," said Mr. Hancock impatiently, "that Mr. Seaton is now satisfied. We'll grant him the existence of as much religious feeling as he likes. How is what we vaguely feel to be reconciled with what we definitely know? That's the question, and I venture to hope we shall keep to it. Now, Mr. Glanville, perhaps you will go on. There is the note you gave me of the order in which you'll take the subjects. See—number one. 'Why is science inconsistent with religious belief of any kind?'"

"Well," said Glanville, "as to this first question, though it took us the other night a good deal of time to consider it, we can now sum up in a sentence or two the conclusion to which we came. Science, if we grasp what it means as a connected whole, makes religion impossible for very simple reasons. Religion, besides implying a goodness in the cosmic principle, implies also in man an enduring and self-active soul, to which, as an individual entity, the cosmos is supremely good. Science not only obliterates every sign of such cosmic goodness, but it reduces this entity to a passing and purely passive phenomenon, which, even when it seems to feel and to will most actively, merely feels and wills as part of the Universal process. If this be the case—and every fresh scientific discovery converges to show

that it is so—Mr. Seaton's ecstasies merely resemble lights which are caught by waves at some peculiar angle, but which neither for these waves themselves, nor for any other waves, mean anything. Between human waves like these and the blank scientific Universe no religious relation of any practical kind is possible.

"Such is the conclusion which common sense must force on us. And now we come to my second point. Men of scientific knowledge, who have also been men of the world enough to realise that a religion of some sort is demanded by the human race, have ever since the days of Comte been making endeavours to give us one; and every religion which they have offered us has been merely a repetition or a variant of what was offered us by Comte himself. Each substitutes for the perfection of the lost cosmic deity the glory, the permanence, the connection with us, of the human race as a whole. Our friend Mr. Brompton did nothing but give us a version of the main features which they all of them have in common; and his version, I must honestly say, was by no means a bad one. Mr. Brompton's message, as he would probably himself call it, was no more absurd than Emerson's. In some ways it was less so. Mr. Brompton and his friends try to give us a connected system: whilst Emerson, who is one of their prophets, gives us no system at all—nothing but a sprinkling of disconnected profundities, one half of which is really in complete contradiction to the other half."

"I'm sorry," said Lady Snowden, "that you think so badly of Emerson. His essays always strike me as full of profound observations."

"True," said Glanville. "I'll quote one or two

presently. But first let me stick for a moment longer to Mr. Brompton, and show you—for this is really worth doing—what the inherent absurdities of his Ethical Church are. Yes, Miss Leighton, yes? You look as if you wanted to say something."

"May I," said Miss Leighton, "tell you what strikes me as the chief one? The devotion to Humanity, which is to keep us all straight, and make us feel so many sublime things, seems to me precisely the kind of sentiment which a solemn, fussy, philanthropic free-thinker, with no temptations and no sense of humour, would delight in, as giving dignity to the fuss which he wants to make, or perhaps I ought to say to the good which he wants to do. But take a man of another kind—and my own experience tells me that he's a very much commoner, and, I may add, a pleasanter individual—who is tempted to prefer the society of, let us say, a Lady Hamilton to a meeting at Exeter Hall. What would this man answer if Mr. Brompton or Comte asked him to desert his lady for the sake of the human race as a whole? He'd simply answer that one living woman, who loved him, concerned him more than a million who were not so much as born; or rather, to be strictly accurate, I expect he'd say, 'Hang Humanity!' That's what Mr. Brompton, to all intents and purposes, said himself when he found that his neighbours had been ruined and not he."

"My dear," said Lady Snowdon, "you're talking excellent sense; but let Mr. Glanville go on, and put things a little more seriously."

"With regard," resumed Glanville, "to this particular point, Miss Leighton, it seems to me, has said nearly all that there is to say. So far as the

office of religion is to guide men by restraining them, the religion of Humanity becomes useless in proportion as we require to use it. It shows itself to be a mere toy. But perhaps I may as well make it plain to you that it really fails just as completely to justify the virtues we are inclined to as it does to restrain us from the sins. The religious conception of Humanity, as Mr. Brompton admitted, can only be brought home to us by the aid of our imaginations, freed, enlarged, and lifted by scientific knowledge. But the imagination, when once it has been set free in this way, and has seen Humanity like a kind of spiritual cocoon—that was Mr. Hancock's phrase—enclosing the individual man, won't be able to stop. It will necessarily mount higher; and will see the cocoon dwarfed by the endless Universe, and doomed like its own units to dissolve into the endless past. It leaves our souls as homeless and as much adrift as we found them. And how do the hierophants of Humanity meet this inevitable difficulty? Mr. Brompton has told us, not in words of his own, but in those of the great men at whose feet he professes to sit—Mr. Frederic Harrison, Comte, and in especial the profound Emerson. We are to get rid of the difficulty by simply refusing to think about it. We are to put it away as a piece of unmanly musing. We are, Lady Snowdon, so says your friend Emerson, 'to overlook' the Universe and see in it merely a collection of passing accidents. Good heavens! if this is the way in which we are to protect the new religion, it's a pity we took the trouble to get rid of the old. It's a pity we didn't take time by the forelock, and dismiss as unmanly musing the higher criticism of the Bible. But I haven't done with the religion of Humanity yet. It has another defect

in addition to its sham Deity. You remember how Mr. Brompton insisted that virtue, for his Ethical Church, meant before all things man's free struggle with evil. Somebody said to him, before Mr. Brock's arrival, that the very science whose authority he was invoking showed that no such struggle was possible; and what was Mr. Brompton's answer? 'Oh,' he said, 'we mustn't push things too far.'

"I noticed that," said Lady Snowdon. "But in spite of his great sharpness—I'm thinking of what he said about the clergy, and their gaps and rifts—the man's a goose. Anyone who contradicts himself like that, and can't see that he does so, must be."

"If Mr. Brompton," said Glanville, "is a goose, he's a goose in distinguished company. When he drops his logic, and smuggles in at the window the doctrine of a mystical freedom which he has just kicked out of the door, he is merely performing the same contemptible conjuring kick which Emerson was occupied in performing from the start of his career to the finish of it. Emerson threw over his old religion, which he called 'a crude objective Theism,' just as Mr. Brompton and his friends do, on philosophic and scientific grounds. In place of his old God he invented a quasi-scientific Oversoul, of which 'each individual mind is,' he said, 'an incarnation'; but he took from the house which he was leaving the whole of its planned furniture, in the shape of its doctrines of moral struggle and heroism, of the awful importance of the choice between good and evil, and the supreme blessedness of what he called 'the triumphs of will.' 'The great object of our lives,' he said, 'is to find our home in God, and the Highest will dwell in each of us, if the sentiment

of duty be there.' But how do these teachings which he stole from his old religion harmonise with the science or the philosophy in deference to which he left it? Listen to this sentence: 'The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn; and Egypt, Greece, Rome, Great Britain, America, lie folded already in the first man.' That's a very well put scientific platitude; but what more room, if it's true, does it allow for choice and heroism in the individual Briton or American than an actual acorn allows to the leaves of an actual oak tree? And now let me give you two other thunder-words of his, as Carlyle would probably have called them—'It is the universal nature which gives worth to particular men.' 'No law can be sacred to me but that of my own nature'—and take these in connection with the final doctrine of our sage that 'the triumph of will' is to 'find one's home with God.' If the Universal Nature, which for Emerson is God Himself, created the acorn which contained us all from the first, how can our home, let us be as bad as we like, be anywhere else but in God, since all that we are is part of Him? If this Universal Nature alone gives us our worth, it stands to reason that it also alone gives us our worthlessness; and to talk as Emerson does about the triumphs of will is just as nonsensical as to talk about the triumphs of gravity. If I have not made this clear, here's one thunder-word more. Emerson is talking about our thoughts. 'When I watch the flowing river,' he says, 'which, out of a region I see not, pours for a season its stream into me, I see that I am a pensioner; not a cause, but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water.' Here you can't fail to realise how he gives his whole case away. If we are merely spectators, not causes, of our good thoughts,

we are merely spectators, not causes, of our bad ones. Both come not from ourselves, but from the Universal Nature, which gives to our personal nature the only law that can be sacred to us. Indeed, he incautiously admits as much himself, when he speaks of 'the depravities which befell Cæsar Borgia,' and says that they are identical with the depravities which 'befall' other human beings. Everything, in short, is a *befalling*, nothing is a willing or a doing. Nothing is the work of man; everything is the work of nature. And now I can show you better than I was able to do a moment ago what I meant when I called Emerson's doctrine of heroism and choice a conjuring trick. When he says that we are, in reality, merely spectators of a certain 'ethereal water,' he, by the adroit introduction of the one word *ethereal*, distracts our attention from what he is really doing. He slips into his hand a card which was up his sleeve, and does not belong to the pack with which he professes to be playing. He tries to trick us into believing that our good thoughts are an inflow from the Universal Nature, but that somehow or other our bad thoughts are not. He tries, moreover, to make us forget also that if the personal nature, which the Universal Nature has given us, is, as he says it is, the only law that can be sacred to us, the triumph of our bad thoughts is as sacred as the triumph of the good. And to this, Lady Snowdon, I have one thing more to add—that if we are merely surprised spectators of our goodness, our goodness itself loses that one essential element—I mean the element of active choice and struggle—which alone for Emerson, for Mr. Brompton, and for all Mr. Brompton's friends, makes it goodness at all, and for which they affect to value it."

"This," said Miss Leighton, "is exactly what you were showing me this morning. If our thoughts are like the waters of your fountain, which are fed by some moorland stream, it's the stream, not the fountain itself, which at times makes the fountain muddy, just as at other times the stream makes the fountain clear. Do you remember that sentence from Pascal, which we talked about when I met you at the railway-station—the sentence in which he describes us as being all so radically wicked that our Maker might at any moment destroy us without the least injustice? That's the old fable of the wolf and the lamb over again."

"Aren't we," said Mr. Hancock, "straying a little from the Religion of Humanity? I believe that our present business is simply to polish off that : and we still, I beg leave to remind you, have got Mr. Brock to deal with : for I suppose, Mr. Glanville, you'll give him a turn before you begin yourself."

"I shall," said Glanville. "I shall give him a very particular turn. But if we seem to have been straying from our point, we've been straying from it in order to come back to it. The Religion of Humanity is only worth considering because it shows us the desperate straits which the human mind is put to, when it tries to find a religion within the prison of science. Its divine Humanity is merely a doll's blue tent, into which the prisoner creeps, and pretends that its walls are heaven ; whilst his fine free moral will is a flower stolen from Theism, and withering in the prison because it can get no water. Poor, unhappy prisoner ! his confinement makes him childish ; and his only solaces are a game and a disappearing theft. It's refreshing to turn from the dotages of the Comtes, Emersons,

and Bromptons to the sound common sense of a man like Mr. Cosmo Brock."

"Refreshing!" said Mrs. Vernon. "I call it more dispiriting still."

"Mr. Brock," said Glanville, "except for a crumb or two of sentiment, which he throws now and then to Cerberus, but makes no use of himself, at all events has the merits of being thoroughly honest and consistent: and so far as he is able to go, I agree with every word he said."

"You agree with him!" said Mrs. Vernon. "Why, he seems to make of life a far worse business than Mr. Brompton did. As far as I understood him, he seems to wipe out everything, though I never had an idea of this from the things he said to me in London."

"I repeat," said Glanville, "that, as far as he goes, I agree with him. Indeed, I propose to take, as I hope to show you presently, his conclusions for my own starting-point."

"But I thought—we all thought," Mrs. Vernon persisted, "that you were going to show us a way of seeing in goodness and religion the things which, after all, are truest. I hope you are not going to take us in."

"If," said Glanville, "to virtue, or goodness, or morality you attach merely the meaning attached to it by Mr. Brock himself—and this is the sole meaning which can be legitimately attached to it by science—if you mean by it merely conduct so adapted to the needs of society that it ministers to the happiness of others no less than to our own: and if, further, you mean by happiness merely any unspecified pleasure which, without injuring society, may be pleasurable to its various members, I agree

with Mr. Brock that the development of such a morality as this has nothing to do with the fact or the idea of freedom ; and I also agree with him that morality of this kind must, in exact proportion as it becomes perfect, lose every trace of the value which all religions impute to it, and die into something no better than the instinct of bees and beavers. But, my dear Mrs. Vernon, why need this discompose us? *Magis est non posse peccare quam non peccare.* It's better to be unable to sin than to abstain from sinning. That is the opinion of the great St. Thomas Aquinas : and you yourself would, I think, be willing to admit that it's better to be incapable of thieving than it is to be always struggling against an inclination to thieve."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Vernon, "one can hardly deny that. And yet you yourself said, at the very beginning of our discussion, that the essence of morality lay in a free choice of goodness. That surely implies a struggle to resist something that's not good. It implies—yes, Mr. Glanville, this is, of course, what I mean ; and I am sure everybody else means the same thing—a struggle not against what is absolutely bad, but against something that is worse as compared with a something better. It needn't be a pushing sideways ; but it must be a pushing upwards."

"Ah," exclaimed Glanville, "we're coming to the point at last. The fact is that Mr. Brock, and all scientific moralists, if they honestly stick to their principles, deprive the word morality of one half of the meaning which it has for you and me, and, indeed, for the world generally. Morality, as we understand it, is conduct of three dimensions. Mr. Brock and his friends regard it as having only two.

For them it's a kind of flatland. Height and depth are wanting. It admits of no relations except such as are lateral. In the scientific Utopia," continued Glanville, "in the perfectly balanced social organism, Mr. Brock expressly admits, as you may see if you study his writings, that whilst many of the selfish impulses will be counteracted by those that are social, and though all selfish excesses will in this way be eliminated, there still will remain a number of selfish pleasures with regard to which the individual will have a perfectly free choice. For example, a man might be just as good a citizen if, his social duties being accomplished, his principal private pleasure consisted in the enjoyment of a delicate but healthy dinner as he would be if his principal pleasure lay in intellectual speculation. Now the ordinary sense of mankind, though it does not condemn good dinners, does, without doubt, rank the propensities of the philosopher as essentially higher in kind than those of the most temperate gourmet. It measures the two by a kind of vertical scale; but in Mr. Brock's Utopia this vertical scale is absent. He has moral efficiencies, but he has no moral elevations. Now, as long as what I call the virtues of elevation are left to us, the virtues of efficiency may die away into instincts; and the idea of virtue, as such, will still remain intact, and command, as it does now, the admiration of religious people. But of these virtues of elevation Mr. Brock has nothing to say. The citizens of his Utopia look knowingly at each other. Thanks to Mr. Brock, everything they see is intelligible. They look up at the sky, and everything is an unmeaning blank. As Mr. Brock tells them in his own encouraging language, it is unknowable. He prophesies the evolution of

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"I think," said Lord Restormel, "that he told us as much yesterday, when he admitted that he knew nothing of love, and cared nothing for poetry."

"My point," continued Glanville, "is this—that knowing so little of life, he has not a notion of how life would be really affected if religion and the idea of freedom were lost to the human consciousness. But what I have said applies not to Mr. Brock only, or the purely scientific man, of whom Mr. Brock is a type. It applies equally to his counterpart—the man who is purely religious—the man who is commonly said to dwell always in the thought of God. Religion for both men is in one way the same thing. It is practically identified with religion in its unmixed essence, though for the one it is a

society into a perfect organism—a perfect social animal; but, for all he can tell us to the contrary, the animal may be a healthy pig.”

“Ah,” said Mrs. Vernon, “I’m beginning to see light now.”

“I hope,” said Glanville, “to show you some more light presently; but I shall have to show you some more darkness first. But here comes tea. Let’s have some, before we resume our journey.”

CHAPTER IV

"WELL," said Glanville, as soon as tea was over, "let us begin again. I said that Mr. Brock, and the men who reason as he does, always leave out, when they come to talk of morality, half of the meaning which ordinary men impute to it. This is merely another way of saying that they know only half of what human life is. The very temperament which fits them for philosophy unfits them as a rule for becoming men of the world. In their outlook on life generally they are merely solemn boobies, as Mr. Brock showed himself when I saw him at a London party."

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dwelling in the thought of a God who is a fancy ; and for the other a dwelling in the thought of a God who is a fact. Both men therefore, in contemplating the extinction of religion, make the same mistake. They think that the loss of it would be the loss of nothing except itself. For the one it would be the loss of a something more precious than all worldly joys ; for the other it would be the loss of an illusion which, even if pleasurable once, will, when we find out its nature, soon cease to be missed. The worldly joys which the religious man disdains, and the man of science accepts as the reasonable end of existence, would still remain—so it seems to them—much what they are now. What I want to show you is that this supposition on their part is equivalent to supposing that, if the sun were extinguished, we should lose nothing but the unpopular pleasure of staring at its blinding disc, and ignoring the fact that the great mass of mankind, who never look at its disc from one year's end to another, would lose, by its loss, all the colours of everything."

"Do you mean," said Mrs. Vernon, "that they would lose the sense of wrong and right, and just simply let themselves go? For many people, surely, have seen and have said that."

"Yes," replied Glanville, "many people have said that ; and most of them have made too much of it. As Mr. Brock told us with absolute truth, it is not religion that keeps us from being thieves and murderers. It's partly law, and partly a social instinct, in the absence of which no society would be possible. I mean something quite different—not that people would grow monsters in the pursuit of pleasures, but that the entire character of all life's pleasures would alter—their range would contract,

and their finest flavours evaporate. I mean that the non-religious man would lose just as much as the religious, and that instead of rejoicing in his freedom to seize on everything he would be far more apt to lament that nothing was worth seizing. In a word, I shall try to show you that the effects of religion on life are far more extensive when they are latent and indirect, and are not commonly thought of as due to religion at all, than they are when religion shows itself as definite adoration and belief. Religion is to life in general what radium is to pitchblende—or, if you like, what the onion is to the salad. It is generally most operative when its presence is least suspected; and if we want to justify religion in the interest of the specifically religious, the first thing we must do is to realise the nature of its influence on the energies, hopes, tastes, judgments, desires, and ambitions and triumphs of those who, in the conventional sense, are not religious at all."

"I confess," said Mrs. Vernon, "I don't grasp your meaning yet."

"I had always hoped," said Glanville, "when I asked you all here to stay with me, that some such discussions as these might somehow take place amongst us. But do you remember what actually started them? It was the Bishop, when he said at dinner that a certain hereditary drunkard wasn't to blame for drinking. And then, do you remember how I set them going about Marcus, by maintaining that he probably wasn't to blame for cheating; and that nowhere, except at a card-table—for he'd cheat them nowhere else—was there any reason why his old friends should avoid him? Surely, Mrs. Vernon, you haven't forgotten how Sir Roderick, and Dick Jeffries too, were down my throat in a moment. And

why? Marcus was to be cut, they said—Marcus was to be treated as an outlaw—not because they were afraid of what he'd do, but because they condemned what he was. His cheating wasn't the result of some nervous twitching with his hands, due, let us say, to some odd St. Vitus's dance. It was just as much open to him not to cheat as to cheat; but he willed to cheat, and he cheated. That was why they thought him a blackguard, and struck his name from the book of life at the Turf. Well, Mrs. Vernon, there you have two men who were speaking and judging purely as men of the world, and one of whom was certainly unconscious of having any religion at all; and yet their entire estimate of the character of one of their intimates depended on a belief, which they could hardly express themselves, that a human being is a self-determining entity—a free first cause, detached from the material Universe. This belief with regard to human freedom is, as we have seen, and as I shall presently remind you again, one of the three beliefs essential to all religions; so now, perhaps, you will see in a general way what I mean by saying that the effects of religious belief may be vital, and even violent, in quarters where all religion seems to be conspicuously absent."

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "I begin to see better now."

"And now," continued Glanville, "having begun with this point, we may as well go on with it: so let us enlarge our view a little. We shall see that Dick Jeffries, when he came back to the dining-room, and said, 'Whatever a man can't help doing, I maintain that a gentleman *can* help cheating at cards,' was merely expressing in his own peculiar language a belief which lies at the bottom of every estimate

formed by mankind generally with regard to conduct and character, and which is ingrained in our deepest feelings, in our conduct, in our language, and in our literature. Think, for example, of any biography you please, or the quarrels of any rival biographers over the character of the same person. Everything turns on the question of whether he possessed qualities which had—it is invariably assumed—their origin in the man himself. This is specially apparent in relation to defects or vices which one biographer imputes to him, and the other biographer denies. The first biographer says that his man was timid or venal. The second charges the first with making base accusations. Let us suppose that the accusations are erroneous : but why on earth are they base? Why are they accusations at all? We shouldn't call it base, although it might prove false, to say of a certain coal that it was not good for steamships, or to say of a certain grass that it would not thrive in England. The mistaken imputations of certain defects to a man are said to be base, and instead of mistakes, are angrily denounced as accusations, because it is tacitly assumed that, unlike the coal and grass, the man had somehow the making of himself in his own hands ; and that in dealing with him we are dealing with an intimate something which has no counterpart in the things of the mineral and vegetable world. We assume him to be precisely the opposite of what Emerson incautiously said he was—namely, a 'surprised spectator' of his own faults and excellencies. Who would care to quarrel over the character of Cromwell, or Carlyle, or Henry VIII., or Nero, or Voltaire, or anybody, if they were merely surprised spectators of what the Universe and their bodies had made them? Half of

our lives are made up of our attitude towards our fellow-men, and the attitude of them towards us. Personal judgments, consisting of blame or praise, of sympathy and appreciation, or else of contempt or hatred, make up the very air which our higher energies breathe, or the food on which alone they live. Read the Bible, read Shakespeare or Dante, or think of the conversation at our own memorable dinner here, and you will see at once that this is so."

"But," said Lady Snowdon, "you've been assuring us—and I think you were right—that even if we adopted the surprised-spectator theory, we should still not only blame, but punish, both thieves and murderers."

"We should punish them," said Glanville, "doubtless ; but we should soon forget to blame them."

"Surely," exclaimed Mrs. Vernon, "that would be the height of injustice—to punish men for doing what they couldn't possibly help."

"Justice," said Glanville, "would have nothing to do with the matter. Lepers cannot help being lepers, but nevertheless we banish them. Thus if a man was unable to help thieving, we should put him in prison for one of three reasons, or for all—either that we might, by the punishment, make theft so distasteful to him, that he should for the future be unable to help being honest ; or else, if his character was incorrigible, that we might save ourselves from the acts of his person ; or else that the sight of his punishment might inflict a fear on others which would make theft impossible for them, whereas, if the fear were absent, it would otherwise prove inevitable. Our husk of acts would thus far remain unaltered, but the living kernel which they now contain would be gone. We may now forgive, we

may sometimes even love the criminal, though we punish and detest his crime. Under these other conditions we should neither detest nor love him. He would be nothing more for us than a suit of infected clothes, which must be either disinfected or destroyed. Everything would be gone that could invite either love or hate. And this applies not to criminals only, but to all of us—whatever we do, whether it be good or ill. Everything that we mean by the human self would be gone—the one, almost the only actor, in the higher drama of life.”

“A friend of mine,” said Lord Restormel, “once told me an interesting story, which illustrates what you say, and expands it, as you yourself, my dear Rupert, of course mean that it should be expanded. He told me he once tried to make love to a lady, at a time when he was full of these ideas of scientific necessity. He told me that the operation proved next door to impossible. The lady, whose past had been inviting rather than immaculate, had been doing what very many interesting women do. She had been preparing the way for a new fault by certain interesting allusions to an old one, which filled her beautiful eyes with a good many interesting tears—received, if I know human nature, by some portion of my friend’s coat. What the lady wished to hear from my friend’s lips was some expression of mournful and tender surprise that an angel, in an unlucky hour, should have done what was not angelic—have done what was not worthy of her own beautiful self. My friend, however, found himself assuring her, that no matter what she had done, it was at once the only thing, and the best thing of which she was capable. The result, he said, was astounding. The lady froze up at once, and acquired more virtue

under this cold douche of determinism than she had ever possessed before under the gospel of free-will."

"I can," said Mrs. Vernon, "quite understand that."

"So can I," said Miss Leighton in an undertone to Lord Restormel.


"If we, none of us," Mrs. Vernon added, "were better than what we do, where should we be—the best of us?"

"I'm glad," said Glanville, "that we are all agreed at last. Lord Restormel has merely anticipated what I was going to say myself. Let us take love as the test of free-will and necessity. If the doctrine of science is fatal to the value of love, we can judge from that of its effect upon life generally. But our i's, in the present case, want a little more dotting. Our friend Mr. Seaton surprised us the other night by fulminating at us the Hegelian doctrine that love, to be valuable, though it must in one sense be free, must at the same time be not free, because the lover's supreme affirmation is that he can't help loving the loved one. Well, without going into the minutiae of this argument as it stands—it didn't, as we saw, apply to the identity of raining and not raining—let me put to Mr. Seaton and to you another side of the question. Even if we admit that the true lover loves because he can't help loving, the essential assumption is that the necessity which thus constrains him is one which originates in the well of his own nature. He is not the nozzle of a hose through which the Universe squirts its waters. This assumption, which is merely another aspect of the belief in freedom, and which is a part also of what we all mean by religion, is what has given to love its magic for all lovers of the world—from

Catullus mourning over the degradation of Lesbia to Dante gazing up at the heavenly eyes of Beatrice. If this belief goes—if it passes out of the world's consciousness—I leave you all to judge how little will be left behind. Now, Mrs. Vernon, you must see pretty well by this time how religion affects life, even when it least seems to do so—how in all the higher, the more civilised judgments and affections at all events, even the ordinary man of the world, the lover, even the lawless lover, if he doesn't see the light of what we may call God, sees *by* it, or by the light of freedom, which is practically the same thing."

"I understand better and better," said Mrs. Vernon, "as you go on. We seem to be coming at last to a turning in your long lane."

"I hadn't intended," said Glanville, "to have been talking theology yet; but I'm now going to take you along a road which will bring us to it in good earnest—though at first you perhaps won't think so. When we saw that a belief in freedom, in man's trans-material life, and also in the existence of some good and accessible God, was implied in all religions that really deserved the name, we saw that this was so because the essence of all religions is the natural desire of man, discontented with his own condition—with its sinfulness, or its weakness, or its narrowness—to expand himself into some larger life. We have considered this desire as culminating in two kinds of fulfilment. One was an ecstatic communion with a real or imaginary God. The other was a spurious, indeed an absurd, imitation of this—namely, a toy union or communion with Humanity as an organic whole. I'm now going to give you some examples of the same desire for



self-enlargement, for union, for communion, for absorption in, something kindred to self, and yet more than self—examples which are ostensibly not religious at all; and I'll give them to you in the words of a thinker who, in the eyes of the religious world, is more vehemently anti-religious, and certainly more anti-Christian, than any other thinker of repute who has risen in modern Europe. I mean Nietzsche, who calls Christianity the contemptible religion of slaves. Nietzsche declares that the desire to get away from themselves, and be lost in something larger, is a constant characteristic of men in proportion as they are great and powerful. Here are some of his instances. If we are men like Shakespeare, he says, we long to lose ourselves in pictures of passionate life. If we are men like Byron, or Cæsar, or Alexander, or Napoleon, we long to lose ourselves in great activities. In one form Nietzsche was possessed by it personally—namely, the passion for speculative truth, which, as Mr. Seaton said, was for him a form of religion. Nietzsche himself affected to regard it as a disease of genius; and ended by observing, as though he were yet farther discrediting them, that the Theist's longings for God are phenomena of the same kind. They are; but I want to show you that Nietzsche made two mistakes. The underlying identity of these secular longings with the theistic, instead of exhibiting the first as diseased or useless, exhibits the connection of the last with all the higher human activities: and secondly, the secular longings are not peculiar to genius, but are, in varying degrees, common to man generally, and give a stir of vitality to all men except the lowest. One of their commonest forms is patriotism—the latent sense of

enlargement which an average man experiences, when he feels himself not as himself, but as part of a great nation.

"I think," said Lord Restormel, "that the peculiar value attached to membership by birth or adoption of any established aristocracy may be explained in the same way. It doesn't depend on mere personal vanity—or the man for whom it does is the quint-essence of all that's vulgar—but it depends on the sense of being identified with some definite larger unit."

"Yes," said Lady Snowdon, "I quite agree with you there, though the kind of vulgarity you speak of often crops up where it shouldn't. I've known more than one duke who was the laughing-stock of his own family, because he passed through life looking at himself with the eyes of his own butler."

"But," continued Glanville, "if we want to get a clear idea of the way in which this longing for self-enlargement vivifies ordinary life, we can, of course, do so best by turning to men of genius, who are types of human character made on a colossal scale—men such as Pericles, Plato, Cæsar, Shakespeare, Bacon, Voltaire, Goethe, Byron, Napoleon, Bismarck; and their case will show us, on the admission of Nietzsche himself, that a longing for the fusion of self with a greater and grander something is the cause of every achievement in thought, in art, in poetry, or practical life by which the nations of men have been enriched from the dawn of civilisation till to-day."

"Yes, Mr. Glanville," said Mr. Hancock, "I more or less catch your drift. You're going to work up from practical self-enlargements like these to the mystical self-enlargements of religion pure and

simple. But what I want to ask you is this. Since these secular self-enlargements are so eminently satisfactory in their results, why can't we take them as so many religions in themselves? If the love of art, or country, or scientific truth can fill up a great man's life, why need we bother ourselves to look for anything more? Surely tangible facts are better than doubtful mysteries—the bone in the dog's mouth than a reflection of the bone in the sky."

"I wish," said Glanville, carefully looking over Mr. Hancock, "that Mr. Brompton had postponed his *hejira*. I think that here we might have made some farther use of him."

"Come," said Mr. Hancock, "you're laughing at me. We don't want any more of that stuff and nonsense about Humanity."

"Well," said Glanville, "there you are. No one thought this religion of Humanity more absurd than you did. And why? Because, like a good sensible man as you are, you saw that in order to grasp Humanity as a whole, the imagination must make an ascent in a sort of mental balloon; and you also saw that this balloon, as soon as it had reached the altitude from which Humanity looked biggest and most impressive, would certainly not stop there, but would carry the aeronaut upwards, till Humanity shrank to a speck in the gulfs of time and space. Well, if this happens with regard to Humanity as a whole, it must *à fortiori* happen with regard to all contained in it. If we are unable to fashion a deity out of the whole human race, still less shall we be able to do so out of one country or empire. And yet you may say that patriotism as a sentiment does exert an influence on men which has often a religious intensity. It does so. But to go back to

one of my former illustrations, I shall show you presently that religion of another kind lurks in patriotism, as radium lurks in pitchblende, and gives it the curious vitality which you impute to the patriotism itself. But first let me take three others of these quasi-religious objects—these greater things into which individual genius expands itself. Let us consider once more the passion for abstract truth—the passion of the thinker and the man of science ; let us take art ; and let us lastly go back to love. The passion for abstract truth is frankly trans-human. Its object is the whole existence of which man is merely a part. It is a passion like that of the saint, which projects itself into the supreme and the universal ; and there is in the heart of it a faith by which, in some ways, the saint's faith is transcended, because it is a leap in the dark—because it says, like Nietzsche, 'I will trust in truth, though it slay me.'"

"I have often," said Lord Restormel, "thought the same thing myself. Many people look on science as though the desire which inspired it was merely the desire to multiply the practical appliances of civilisation—railways, gas, aniline dyes, and newspapers. It has given us these things, but it has given us these things by the way. They are merely crumbs which have fallen from that austere and sacramental table at which the spirit of man breaks bread with the Universe. Yes, Rupert, you have certainly given us here a demonstration of how what is—well, a form of theistic religion—a cryptic Theism—a Theism which does not understand itself—has been practically the source of progress in even its most material forms."

"And now," said Glanville, "let us go on to art

and love. Our friend Mr. Brock told us that he could understand neither; though, oddly enough, he has sacrificed the whole of his own life to that passion for truth which is really akin to both of them. I wish to dwell upon art—and more especially poetry—because, as Shakespeare says, it is a mirror held up to nature—a glass in which man beholds his natural face. Well, the essence of poetry is life raised, unified, expanded, and elevated by emotion. But by what kind of emotion? Nietzsche tells us that the poet—the Goethe or the Shakespeare—by expanding himself into his own creations, satisfies himself and achieves his rest. No idea could be more foolish—more wanting in critical insight. The fusing and kindling emotion which turns life into poetry, and which shows in visible form what life always is in secret—for the humblest reader who appreciates Goethe or Shakespeare merely hails, in their poetry, a something which is already in himself—this emotion is essentially something which art can never satisfy. The doctrine of art for art's sake is nonsense. A poem like *Faust* or *Hamlet* holds the emotion which inspires it, not like a beautiful animal kept in a cage for our inspection, but like a perfume which is captured only that it may be continually exhaling itself. A work of art as such, and as considered by the author and by the world, points always, like a magnetic needle, to something or other that is beyond. Of this fact I've given you one illustration already, when I tried to show you that all the great dramas of the world would lose their meaning—and, indeed, could never have been written—apart from the assumption that men must have some element of freedom in them which could not possibly emanate from the order of things known to science."

"I'm not certain," said Lord Restormel, "that I quite agree with you there. There can surely be a poetry of fatalism, as the Greek tragedians show us."

"Yes," replied Glanville, "but why are their works tragic? Why does the doom of *Œdipus* in the toils of fate appal us? Because the story throughout makes an implied appeal to some sense on our part, more or less obscure, that the victim bound by the Fates was naturally a free man. On the surprised-spectator theory the entire tragedy of *Œdipus* would sink from a tragedy into a not very interesting platitude. His involuntary crimes, in their essence, would be no more tragic than his catching involuntarily measles, mumps, or whooping cough. But what I'm talking of now is the question not of freedom, but of some goal, some object of action, towards which in great art it is assumed, or definitely stated, that the freedom assumed already ought properly to direct itself. We can see this most clearly when we consider how art treats love—the passion with which, as Mr. Brock complained, it is foolish enough to be mainly occupied. What does Faust do when he wants to seduce Marguerite? He talks to her of what love points to, rather than of what it actually realises—a something of which no man can truly say 'I believe in it,' but of which none can say 'I do not believe'—a something of which we can hardly say more than this—

" 'Words are but cloud and smoke
Hiding the heaven's glow.' "

There you have the light of what Theist and Pantheist call God, hidden only by a semi-transparent veil: and this is the light by which art, and all civilised life, are coloured."

"Mr. Glanville," said Mr. Hancock, "excuse me for one moment. You'll think me a very poor crawling sort of worm to drag my cold trail across you. But surely you can have fine poetry of a kind—I don't say I like the kind, but still beautiful in its way—like that of Gautier or Beaudilaire, which celebrates a love avowedly vicious and sensual—the very reverse of what you are now contemplating."

"My answer to your objection," said Glanville, "is simply this—that vice, when cultivated and deliberately pursued as vice, is neither more nor less than a species of inverted mysticism."

"That," said Lord Restormel moodily, as though brooding over his own experience, "I am persuaded is absolutely true. It's an altar built, as one of its own poets admits, to

"The unknown God of unachieved desire."

"Well," said Glanville, "and now let me go back to my own point—to the nature of the love which is more or less vaguely upward, and which all great vitalising and constructive art assumes as the type of the passion by which all other types are measured. I will illustrate this by quoting to you a certain celebrated expression of it. I know the passage by heart. It contains the words of a man who was once sitting by a woman at the window of a house in Ostia—a woman to whom soon he was to say good-bye for ever. Having talked together intently of many serious things, 'We,' the writer says—for he tells his own story—'lifting ourselves yet more ardently towards that which never changes, did by degrees pass through all things bodily—beyond the heavens even, and all the suns and stars. By inward musing we soared even beyond these. We came to

our own minds, and we passed beyond them also, that so at last we might reach the place of plenty, where thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is the wisdom by which all these things are made. And what we then said was on this wise. If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed—hushed the images of earth and air and sea—hushed the poles of heaven—and the very soul were hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self should transcend self—hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, and whatever exists only in transition—if these should all be hushed, having only opened our ears to the voice of Him that made them, and He speak alone not by them but by Himself, that we might hear His word not through any tongue of flesh, nor angel's voice, nor in the riddle of a dark similitude, but might hear Him whom in these things we love—His very Self without aid or voice from these; could this be continued on, and other visions far unlike it be withdrawn, and this so enwrap the beholders in their inward joy that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding, would not this be Enter thou into the joy of the Lord? And when shall that be? Shall it not be when we rise again, but shall not all be changed?"

"Why, Mr. Glanville," exclaimed Mrs. Vernon, "that's out of St. Augustine! It comes in a little book that was given me by one of my godmothers."

"No doubt," said Glanville, "you didn't expect to find me bring you back to anything at all like that. Well, don't be in a hurry to credit me with more than I really deserve. Some of you will think, perhaps, from my dragging in St. Augustine, that I wish to represent aspirations towards a God like his as the thing that is at the bottom of all the higher

emotions. I don't. I draw no conclusion of so narrow a kind as that. I have gone to St. Augustine merely in order to illustrate the general not the particular character of the aspiration which I refer to, and of its object. The object may often be very different from the God of the Christian saint. It may be very much more vague. It may appeal to sympathies of quite another order. It may appeal to us as the essence of beauty, rather than the essence of holiness. It may be calculated to respond rather to a passion than to a prayer. It need not shine on us only through the glass of Christian Churches. It may shine on us also—to quote a phrase of Ruskin's—from the liquid melted blue of the deep wells of the sky. Its eyes need not only be the eyes of an awful and severe parent—they may also be the eyes of an infinite and unfathomable lover. It may touch us as the Eternal Feminine, no less than the Eternal Righteousness. Athens and Capua have their skies no less than Jerusalem. But whatever this Something is, it is a Something which is beyond ourselves, and which yet responds to us with a promise of future union. It is a Something towards which the lover aspires, by inward musing, just as Augustine aspired towards the Shepherd that feeds Israel. Let the loved give to the lover what gift she will, he will feel that it is only a stage on a road that leads farther.

“‘Wouldst thou me? And I replied,
No, not thee.’”

“‘Personally,” said Lord Restormel, “were I asked to choose between these Somethings, I should, like Paris, give the apple to the Eternal Feminine. I could worship the Universe more easily as the

feminine principle than as the male. Instead of approaching the god like a Neapolitan beggar, and making an exhibition to Him of all my spiritual sores, I should look into the eyes of the goddess as Paolo looked into Francesca's, and feel that my worship of her was not so much a homage as a wooing. But, my dear Rupert, your analysis is perfectly correct. Not in love only, but in all great effort, whatever we may accomplish, we stand seeing something beyond it—

“‘Tendentesque manus ripae ulterioris amore.’

I wonder what our friend Mr. Brock would say to all this, could he hear us.”

“I know,” said Glanville, “since he can't hear us, what we may say of Mr. Brock. Mr. Brock—and his brother philosophers are like him—I don't mean you, Alistair—you're quite the other way—Mr. Brock, as he himself told us, sweeps love aside as beneath the notice of science. He really is—though the good man does not know it—sweeping life aside as beneath the notice of science also, just as he did, Mrs. Vernon, at the ball in London. He is personally as incapable of understanding human life, as a whole, as he would be—to judge by the look of him—of riding a buck-jumping horse.”

“I'm afraid,” said Mrs. Vernon, “you'll think me a devil's advocate; but I ask you only because I want to know. It seems to me, Mr. Glanville, that in giving us this mysterious Something Beyond as a Something which we *must* believe in, if we would live like reasonable beings, you are practically coming back to Mr. Seaton's doctrine that ecstasy is a genuine insight into the truth of things after all—that it points to some Goodness, or if you like, some

divine Beauty, which really is the principle of the Universe, and with which we may put ourselves in connection. But when Mr. Seaton said this, you all combined to sit on him, and to dismiss his view as an illusion."

"I have not said," replied Glanville, "that it is not an illusion now. As to that, if you are good enough to listen to me, I propose to say more hereafter. The only point which I have tried to make clear now is, that if it is an illusion, it is an illusion of such efficiency, that it forms the most vivifying element in the civilised life of man, and that all human morality, which is more than the morality of an ant-hill, is radio-active with its recognised or secret presence. And now," Glanville continued, "we've seen the importance to life of two of these three beliefs, which are the intellectual basis of Theism—a belief in some God, or His equivalent; and a belief in human freedom. As to the importance of the last, our chairman is an unbiassed witness. We must believe we are free, Hancock, whether we are really free or no; otherwise we couldn't get on. That's your doctrine, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hancock. "I don't go back on that—not one little bit. We must, as I told the Bishop, assume freedom as a sort of working hypothesis. I confess that seems good enough for me."

"Well," said Glanville, "we'll talk about that later. But there's one more doctrine as to which I must say something first. Let us take our belief in freedom and God for granted, and let us suppose that by their radio-activity life is given us as a drama of free-choice and effort, and of what religious people would call an upward, or a God-ward struggle. But in order to perpetuate this effort and struggle some-

thing is still wanting. We must recognise, as a matter beyond question, that this struggle is of supreme importance. The other beliefs may give form to life. This one is absolutely necessary, in order to give it magnitude. Otherwise, let men choose and aspire, succeed or fail as they will, they will seem to us little better than choosing and aspiring toys, whose success or failure will mean nothing when the day's game is over, and they are broken or put back in the toy-box. Well, this sense of life's importance can be given in one way only, and that is by our third belief that the soul of man is immortal—immortal in the sense that, even if its final destiny is Nirvâna, the consequences of the deeds done to-day in the body do not end when the body is dust or carrion, but, for good or evil, renew themselves in some farther life. The ordinary religious person looks on the doctrine of immortality merely as a sort of telescope, through which we may see a heaven where psalm-singing never ends. It is just as important to the ordinary man of the world—to the lover, the poet, the statesman, the builder of kingdoms—as a sort of mental magnifying-glass through which we may see earth. Apart from this belief, a moment of clear reflection will be enough to turn any one of us into his own Gulliver, and will show him the freest and most aspiring hero imaginable as nothing but a mannikin posturing in a doll's theatre, who raises a laugh by tearing a passion to tatters."

"I suppose," said Mr. Hancock, who though he did not much like these observations, regarding them almost as an affront to his own success in life, was anxious to show his wide grasp of a situation, "I suppose you mean what Goethe seems to have

meant, when he said in one of his poems—a favourite of dear old grand Carlyle's—now there was a hero if you please—

“‘Choose well, and your choice is
Brief, but yet endless.’”

“Precisely,” said Glanville. “That just expresses my meaning.”

“Well,” said Mr. Hancock, who, feeling that he had made a point, saw an opportunity of retiring with flying colours, “how goes the enemy?” And he took his watch from his pocket. “Good gracious!” he said, “do you know what time it is? We have, Mr. Glanville, still a great deal more to hear from you; so as this seems a good break in your argument, we had better bring down our thoughts to the process of dressing for dinner.”

“By the way,” said Glanville, “for the sake of a little variety, as the night promises to be as warm again as ever, I thought that instead of sitting on the terrace or in the portico, we’d have our tea after dinner in front of the old abbey.”

CHAPTER V

“**A**RE these the notes of what you are going to say to us presently?”

The question was addressed by Miss Leighton to her host at a tea-table, on which were a pile of packets in large envelopes. The table, lit by candles, whose flames shone steady and motionless, was placed under the full moon by the door of the ruined chapel; and the party was gathered round it wrapped in great-coats and opera-cloaks. The sound of the sea came faintly from far below; and the dome of the sky, cloudless and thick with stars, rose from the quivering silver at a distance which seemed incalculable.

“I wish,” said Glanville, “that these documents, which the post must have just brought, bore on any questions so interesting as those on which I hope to speak to you. I know what is in them from the envelopes, and I know that they come from certain very important friends of mine, who are anxious that I should leave everything in order to devote my mind to them. The great question which, in one form or another, has been occupying us here ever since our Bishop left us, has been, ‘What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’ My important friends, in these documents, are proposing to me a variety of others. The following will, I know, be some of them. How

many more hundreds of thousands of white thread stockings do we import from Germany than we did twenty years ago? How many miles of the shirtings, trouserings, and cambrics manufactured in this country are kept to cover British bodies and be blown into by British noses? Is the increase in our imports of Canadian cheese balanced by the increase in our exports of oleo-margarine?"

"You don't mean to tell me," said Miss Leighton, "that anybody wants you to busy yourself with stuff like that?"

"I was busy," said Glanville, "with questions of the same kind for three hours last night, after you had sung your song. As to questions like these, there's a chance of knowing where one is. I wonder if I shall be able to show you where we are as to others? When we've done tea, I shall try. Shall we stay where we are, or would you rather go inside? There are chairs there, and a lamp also."

A sense of the romantic, and perhaps of something else, made everyone decide in favour of an adjournment to the chapel, where, as soon as they were seated, Mr. Hancock opened the proceedings, by briefly observing that Mr. Glanville would take up the thread of his argument at the point where it had been lately dropped. "Mr. Glanville," he said, "had just finished pointing out to us the practical part played by religious belief, not in the religious life, but the life of the world generally; and the practical change for the worse—here I partially agree with him—which would result if this belief were withdrawn from the human consciousness. I don't know, though," he muttered, as he settled himself into an attitude of attention, "that this fact makes the belief any truer."

“My dear Hancock,” said Glanville, “there’s the point we are coming to. Does the practical value of the belief or beliefs in question show that they correspond to any external fact? Come—let us start our argument. We have two ways proposed to us of interpreting human life. One is the way of religion. The other is the way of science. Science exhibits man as a bubble on the universal Substance; and it does this now in a way so convincing to the reason, that no one would be tempted to question the account it gives us, if it were not for certain consequences against which our nature rebels. The mental bubble has no sooner been formed than it puts forth a claim to qualities which its parent could not have given it, and imputes qualities to the parent of which the parent gives no signs. This behaviour, in the light of advancing knowledge, seems hardly more reasonable than the aimless struggles of a child; and the mind would by-and-by probably cease making them, if it were not for one curious fact. In proportion as the mind does make them, energy, civilisation, even science itself, and all the more elaborate pleasures of human life, develop themselves; and tend to dwindle and disappear in proportion as the struggles cease. Here, accordingly, we get a certain argument from results, which is more than a vague sentiment. It is an appeal to practical common sense, and may briefly be put in this way. If we find, as a solid fact of experience, that a certain method of explaining and viewing existence is, when pursued exclusively, destructive of that which everybody regards as civilisation and progress, the probability is strong that this method, however complete it seems, has failed to take cognisance of certain actual facts; and

further, if the opposite method, let it seem never so irrational, is found to produce civilisation as surely as the other destroys it, there is a corresponding probability that this method has hit these actual facts which the other has somehow missed."

"Let me see," said Mr. Hancock, "in my *Dictionary of Contemporary Life*, I think I published an article about some American thinker, who reasoned very much as you do, and invented for his method some new label. Was it 'pragmatism'? At all events, it meant the theory that the truth of a religious doctrine is best tested by its practical effects on the believers in it."

"The argument," said Glanville, "in itself is more or less instinctive in all of us. The Church of Rome was pragmatic when it locked up Galileo. But the force of the argument altogether depends on the number and character of the effects which the religious belief produces, and the number and character of the effects which an opposite belief destroys."

"Yes," said Mr. Hancock. "Some people, no doubt, are very fond of church-going: and, according to this method, they would, I suppose, argue that religious belief must be true because it results in psalms and services, whilst science must be false because it would rob them of these consolations. But other people would argue in precisely the opposite way. They would say that science must be true because it shuts the churches up, and instead of the Sabbath gives them a new bank-holiday."

"That's what I mean," said Glanville. "In testing both religion and the negation of religion by their results, religious people make the mistake of re-

stricting the scope of their inquiry. They consider these results only in their relation to the consciously religious—the class to which church-going, or its equivalent, represents the chief need in life. This appeal is far too narrow to be effective. If this is the whole of the matter, the mass of mankind will say—yes, Hancock, you are perfectly right there—‘So much the better. We are relieved of a disagreeable duty.’ My own aim is to make the appeal wider—to convert it from an appeal to a conventicle into a plebiscite of mankind generally—to show men like the author of *Don Juan* that the matter is as important to them as to the author of *The Christian Year*. But religious philosophers entirely fail to do this, because the strength of the impulse which alone seems to them religious, makes all those energies, passions, arts, and enjoyments from which this impulse is absent, abhorrent to them. They never dream of showing—indeed, their temperament disqualifies them from seeing—how this world itself depends for its vitality on beliefs, of which they foolishly fancy that it flourishes in iniquitous independence. Accordingly, from this world of mundane strength and beauty, their argument runs off like water from a duck’s back. Do you see what I’m driving at? Do you see my general meaning?”

“Yes,” said Lady Snowdon, “but go on.”

“I’m thinking,” said Glanville, “how I can put it more clearly. It is obvious, of course, that if any doctrine as to life is to have any serious and permanent effect on conduct, the doctrine must be one whose effects will be strong and specific in proportion to the intensity with which it is dwelt on, and the completeness with which its meaning is grasped.

Many people who hold it may not grasp it completely; but the general character of the effect which it tends to produce on them, whether for good or ill, will be the same in kind as that which an hour of intense meditation on it leaves on a man when the hour of meditation is over."

"Yes," said Lord Restormel, "the Catholic Church knows this, when she urges her sons to meditate on the passion of Christ."

"Well," Glanville continued, "let us suppose that in some brilliant street, along which pass the most distinguished men of a nation—statesmen, poets, inventors, men who are loved by women—there are two opposite buildings, set apart for meditation on two opposite doctrines as to the nature and significance of life—one being the doctrine of science, the other that of religion; and that a man on entering one finds his whole being impregnated with a sense of some superhuman Power responsive to all his aspirations, of the freedom of his own will, and of the persistence of his own personality; and that on entering the other he finds all his being impregnated with the blank sense that no such Power exists, that even his will is not really his own, and that death ends that puny storm in a teacup which he inaccurately calls *himself*. And let us suppose that a man of commanding intellect, of high ambitions, or of ardent passions—a Pitt, a Byron, or a Romeo—who is suffering from some discouragement, enters the scientific building in order to brace himself up by an hour's communion with the final facts of existence. What will be his experience? Just as the Saint in meditation sees the five sacred wounds, so will this man see under its three aspects the unreality of everything that has filled him with hope

and energy. Does he try to lift himself to the mystery from which he himself has sprung? As much of it as he can ever know is miserable in his soul already. Does he try to brace himself for some brilliant but arduous action, which shall give him, at least, the comfort of dignity in his own eyes? He finds that his will is his slave-driver, not his slave—that it is no more his than the wind which shakes the reed is the reed. Does he turn for encouragement to the thought of that endless ascending road up which, for a mile at least, he may help his kind to travel? He sees that the course of humanity is not up a road but across it; that his race is nothing but a queue of complaining figures being hustled through a turnstile out of one nothingness into another. Do you think that our friend, after an hour's meditation of this kind, would emerge strengthened for his day's efforts or not? If he were a Byron, would he be in a mood to compose *The Isles of Greece*? If he were a Romeo, would he be in a mood to see heaven in the eyes of Juliet? Or would he, were he a Pitt, be inclined to do anything but anticipate in life the words of Pitt dying—'What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!' And now," continued Glanville, "let us suppose that at the same time, along the other side of the street, has been slouching a discouraged Napoleon, who enters the other building, and finds himself filled with a sense of the three constructive mysteries—that life is more than it seems to be, that the will is its own master, and that man, when his will is strong, may compel a will still stronger to lend him its own strength, and associate its sublimity with his. What will be the effect of such a meditation as this? The statesman over the way totters out like a paralytic.

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The slouching adventurer emerges the Man of Destiny."

"I like that," said Mrs. Vernon. "But," she added, after a moment's reflection, "I should never have thought of taking Napoleon,

"Who believed in his Fortune and not in his God,"

as an example of the effects of religion."

"No example," said Glanville, "for our present purpose could be better. When we talk of God now, as I tried to explain before, we are not talking of a Power with any one moral expression—not a magnified saint, or a magnified Methodist minister. We simply mean a Power beyond man, whose nature accords with anything felt to be good by the man who is, or believes he is, in communion with it. This, for us at present, is the only point of importance; for such a Power, whatever may be its character, is equally a Power which science exhibits to us as the supreme delusion; and whether we think of it as Holiness, or Wisdom, or Beauty, or Pride, or Passion, so long as we realise that a belief in our own possible union with it is the vital force which produces the finer flowers of life, we have taken the first step on the road to religion of any kind. We have admitted that a mystical faith which ignores the negations of science is, even if false, nevertheless a practical necessity for the life of the man of the world, no less than that of the saint."

"I wish, Rupert," said Lord Restormel, "that the clerical defenders of religion would, for their own sake, take a lesson from you, and begin by explaining the effects of a faith in a God of some kind, without frightening the world by insisting He is the God of the Catechism. They ought to be content

with insisting upon that later, and not begin their Euclid in the middle of the sixth book."

"It seems to me, though," said Lady Snowdon, "that a faith so indeterminate as this would hardly give life what you call its third moral dimension. It would lift the lives of each of us, but would lift them all indiscriminately. It would leave them on the same dead level. A Tiberius at Capri, and a Christian martyr at the stake, would equally find in it his own propensities glorified."

"That," said Glanville, "is in a measure true. I admitted the fact just now, when I said that vice, deliberately pursued as vice—which is a very different thing from mere unlicensed affection, though Christian moralists lump the two together—is a kind of inverted mysticism. It is a struggle towards a mystical nadir, instead of a mystical zenith. Here, however, we can bring in practical facts to help us. Vice of the kind in question—the development of mysticism downwards—is condemned by precisely the same experimental test that renders the truth of the upward mysticism probable. The upward mysticism, in proportion as it is influential, makes life continually develop fresh flowers of civilisation. The downward exhausts the tree, and if unchecked, would destroy it. So, you see, Lady Snowdon, that if we begin with taking human life as merely the organised beehive which our friend Mr. Brock offers us, and then envelop this in a mysticism so indeterminate that the mystical Power towards which we thus lift it may be the God of Napoleon or Tiberius quite as well as the God of Mr. Keble, our mystical firmament, as soon as it touches fact, automatically divides itself into two opposite hemispheres, which at once in a general, if

not in a precise way, give conduct space for its third moral dimension. I admit," Glanville continued, "that the question is still left doubtful as to which point in the upper firmament is the highest—or, in other words, which of its shining stars, if the whole be not a dream, is nearest to the truth of things. If we judge of them by their effects on life, opinions will vary widely. The star of the beauty of holiness has a glory that appeals to some. The star of the holiness of beauty has a glory that appeals to others. Others will fix their eyes on the star of romance and passion. But all these stars will, at all events, have one common quality. Each will fill the man who aspires to reach it with a sense that he is lifting himself by an active effort of his own, and winning his way towards some triumphant life; whilst those whose eyes are fascinated by the stars below will feel themselves surprised spectators of a plunge that ends in death."

Mrs. Vernon's spirits suddenly seemed to rise. "And so, Mr. Glanville," she said, "if all this is true, you really think that we get the whole thing back again—good and evil, and God, and a future life, and that all we have to do is to settle with our own consciences which conception of God is really the best and highest. If that's the case, I suppose the whole difficulty is over."

"On the contrary," said Glanville, "all we have done yet is to see what the nature of the supreme difficulty is. But don't let that discourage you. Rather remember this—that if any intellectual difficulty is ever to be really solved, the first step is to see it in all its magnitude. We have got no further than this first step yet. Do you see what I mean?"

"I'm not sure," said Mrs. Vernon, "that I do. You bewilder me."

"Well," said Glanville, "let me, in a very few words, put the whole thing over again. We all of us set out on these discussions of ours with two distinct conceptions in the background, or the foreground, of our minds. One was the conception of civilised human life, with its knowledge, its arts, its affections, and its various ideals, as something superior to the life of our naked progenitors, whose homes were in the trees or rocks. The other was the conception of science, as the one means of discovering the truth of everything to which its methods of discovery can be applied. Well, we began with science; and what we gradually saw was this—that its methods of discovery, which have by this time embraced all things—have drawn not only the Universe, but ourselves, as vanishing parts of it, into what Sabatier calls 'one causal and necessary network.' We saw also that science, as the result of this, forces us to recognise the hopes and the beliefs of religion as merely delusions of a mind whose knowledge was incomplete. Then, turning from science to our conceptions of human life, we have seen that in proportion as these delusions are taken from us, the value of life itself disappears in a corresponding way; or, in other words, that the beliefs which are our supreme delusions scientifically, operate in practical life as the supreme germinating truths—that whilst science is stultified if we accept them, civilisation is stultified if we don't. We thus get to a deadlock, which seems utterly hopeless. Must we, as Sabatier asks, renounce our right to think—in other words, our belief in science—so as to retain energy for living, or

consent to lose this energy, so as to retain the right to think? The world at present alternates between the two choices, like a feverish man who lies first on one side and then on the other in bed, and in each attitude suffers an equal restlessness."

"No description of our condition," said Lord Restormel, "could be more true than that. We want to know how you propose to get us out of it."

"The first step," said Glanville, "towards getting out of it is, as I say, to understand its nature thoroughly. We have certain beliefs, which we desire to retain, on the one hand, and the compact Universe of scientific fact on the other, from which those beliefs are altogether excluded. The problem is how to reconcile the two. Our next step must be to see the urgent necessity for a reconciliation. Our next must be to see that all the reconciliations at present offered to us are hopeless. Now, as to the necessity for a reconciliation, there is one way, and one way only, in which this can be brought home to us. It is the way—the *via dolorosa*—by which, in all these discussions of ours, I have been doing my best to lead you. It is to realise, detail by detail, the full practical effects which science has on life, in so far as we surrender ourselves to its guidance—to realise that it strips us of everything which gives worth to us in our own eyes—that it will not let us go till it has extracted the last farthing—that it not only desolates the religious man, but the worldly man also; and finally that it takes the vital force out of civilisation at large, just as much as it does out of the mind or soul of the individual. By realising this, we secure an immense advantage at once. Instead of the solitary soul, crying out in the wilderness against the nega-

tions of the scientific Universe, we elicit a corporate protest from the mass of civilised Humanity. We have *vita contra mundum*. The whole practical world is on our side, demanding a place in the Universe for those three beliefs, which the Universe shuts out by a seemingly impenetrable wall."

"Yes," said Mr. Hancock, "but a million men, if they haven't got the right weapons, are in a case like this no stronger than one."

"I don't," said Lord Restormel, "altogether agree with you. They may stimulate each other to make them. *Furor arma ministrat*. But tell us, Rupert—this is what we want to know—how would you attack the impenetrable wall yourself?"

"That," said Glanville, "is what I am now coming to. In order to attack it successfully, we must begin by abandoning altogether the methods which are popular with the champions of religion to-day. We mustn't pepper the ponderous stones with pistol-bullets, and pretend that the splash of lead which each bullet makes is a perforation, or fancy, like the Bishop of Glastonbury and most of our pulpit apologists, that every hole left by a scaffolding pole is a gap through which we may manage to crawl into the heart of the fortress. We must abandon the method of direct attack altogether. And now, Mrs. Vernon, as an example of the futility of all these clerical tactics, I will do what I told you the other night I would do. I will show you how Sabatier—the most accomplished apologist of to-day—thinks he has broken through what he calls the 'causal network of science.' In an answer to the critics of his book *The Philosophy of Religion*, who declared that he had surrendered himself to the doctrines of necessary evolution, he naïvely explains that he gets out

of the difficulty by regarding evolution as a mere succession of phenomena produced and fitted together by a series of creative acts, as if they were so many marbles which a boy puts in a row, instead of being so many buds which sprout from a growing stem; whilst as to the freedom of man, which is, he admits, unthinkable, he frankly confesses that he starts with positing this as a mystery. He actually persuades himself that he has reconciled religion with science, when he merely misconceives or ignores everything that science teaches. What a confession of helplessness for an admirable and able man! And now I'm afraid I must turn upon present company. Yes, Alistair, I must once more have a go at you. You would break through the wall by showing that it has no existence—by doing what you call getting rid of the material Universe. My dear good fellow, believe me, the attempt is hopeless. By turning the Universe into a system of related ideas instead of a system of related bodies and forces, you do nothing to liberate your soul from the bondage of universal necessity. The angles at the base of an abstract isosceles triangle are no more free to be anything but equal to one another than the angles at the base of a triangle whose sides are deal or iron."

"To be sure," said Mr. Hancock, "abstract truths, like those of mathematics, are the very types of truths which are necessary. Idealism, Mr. Seaton, won't give you a free will, any more than it will give you a free multiplication table."

"Yes, Hancock," said Glanville, "but don't you be too cock-a-hoop. I am going presently to walk into you too."

"Before you walk into him," said Lady Snowdon,

"may I venture on a suggestion of my own? It was a goose, you know, that saved the Capitol. Let us suppose that, instead of trying to find gaps in the scientific wall, religion stoops to conquer, and suppressing its protests, is admitted into the fortress as a friend. Is there no chance that it may be able to do from within what it can't do from without? Can't it say to science, when once it is inside, 'Here I am, you must do the best you can with me'?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon, "I quite agree with my aunt. Let religion get inside with its light in a dark lantern, and let it turn the light on then. If it does this, it will show one thing at once—that there does exist what you call the third moral dimension—an up and a down—a moral bad and good, which are bad and good—this is what I really mean—not because of the consequences they lead to, but because they are consequences themselves. It will show, for instance, that mind, soul, thought, the perception of beauty, are more than the grossness of the body, with which, for the time, they are associated—the body which, as soon as we cut it open, disgusts us; and in doing this it must, so it seems to me, show that there is some God at the back of things who is above matter, although He made it."

"You are," said Glanville, "at all events, a very representative thinker. The vileness of the flesh, the lowness of all material processes, in especial those to which the life of every human being is due, these are ideas common to nearly all religions. Thought is a sublimity—the thinking brain is a mess. Melancholy is an exquisite mystery; black bile is dirt; and I quite agree with you that if our moral and mental life is merely a result of the action

of these organs, the value we attach to that life is not only lowered, it is destroyed. But brains and black bile don't stand alone. They are parts of the material Universe which you assume your God to have made. They are, moreover, the most elaborate parts of it. There are more cells in each average brain and liver than there are men on the globe. Are the phenomena of the brain and the liver, of reproduction and heredity, regrettable errors on the part of the Supreme Wisdom? Or have they sprung up of themselves, as a kind of perverse putrescence, which the Deity has, nevertheless, selected as the vehicles of the human soul? In that case they are like a heap of carrion, and the Deity like a poodle that has rolled in it. You can't think that. If the Universe is the work of God, one part of it is no less divine than the other. So far as God is concerned, it is all on one moral level; and if human life is too good to be the product of the Universe, the Universe must be too bad to be the product of a good God. So I fear that by smuggling your lantern into the camp of the enemy you merely re-exhibit, instead of solving, the problem."

"I remember," said Lord Restormel, "a conversation I had in India with a Brahmin who had studied science in Europe, and he wound up with saying this. 'Science,' he said, 'is a Pantheism, or it is nothing. This is the last word of your Brocks, Spencers, and Haeckels. The last word of religion is holiness—an idea which we understand quite as well as Christians. The sense of holiness, if science is our sole guide, is a piece of magnesium wire ignited in a dark cavern: but it only lights up for a moment this cavern, which is the Universe, to show us that its walls are ice, its floor an obscene slime,

and that its darker recesses are gleaming with the teeth of monsters.'"

"There," said Glanville, "we have the old conclusion over again. Knowledge must die in order that life may flourish ; or life must wither in order that knowledge may live. Well, now at last let me give you my own solution—or rather a humble indication of the quarter in which I think that a solution may be found."

"Now," said Mr. Hancock, "let us all sit still and listen."

CHAPTER VI

“LET me, then,” said Glanville, “start with repeating one thing. If we want to get religion inside the citadel of science, we must abandon all attempts at any direct attack. We must find the solution of our difficulty in quite another direction. And now I’m going to make use of two long words, one of which is rather pedantic, although it is fairly familiar, whilst the other is so wholly pedantic that I almost feel it to be indecent. The solution of our difficulty may, I venture to think, be found in an addition to our accepted psychology, or rather, perhaps, to our epistemology. Epistemology, Mrs. Vernon, is merely the professor’s word for the science of the ways in which we know things. Well, the ways in which we know the things both of ordinary life and science, are the familiar ways of the experience given us through the senses, ordinary reasoning on the facts with which this experience provides us, and a further reflection on what the nature of these facts is. In these ways we know that lemons fall to the ground ; that they fall to the ground in accordance with the law of gravitation ; and that we know of the substance of lemons only what our senses tell us. We know also that two lemons added to two lemons make four lemons ; and that not more than one lemon can occupy the same space. Now, since we have seen that the assumptions

involved in theistic religion are possible only if we contradict the demonstrations of science, we may compare them to the assertion that two lemons added to two lemons, besides making four, may sometimes make five also; and that two material bodies, not only cannot, but can, occupy at the same time identically the same space."

"But surely," said Mrs. Vernon, "no one wants to make that out."

"No," said Glanville, laughing, "not these particular things; but they do want to make out that human conduct is free, that the Universe is benevolently ordered for the good of the human unit, and that the human unit persists when the human body dissolves; though, if we turn to the ordinary means of knowledge, we know that human conduct is inexorably determined by its antecedents; that the Universe takes no heed of the unit, as such, at all; and that the unit, being the unity of its body, goes to pieces along with it. Now people, who in spite of science, persist in making these assertions, are driven to defend them in one or other of four ways. They either defend them, like our friend Mr. Hancock, by calling them working hypotheses; or they say, as Lady Snowdon said, that the logic of science takes away so much from us, if we push it to its last conclusions, that common sense, after a certain period, refuses to accept it as valid; or else they defend them by calling them an act of faith; or else they say, as Sabatier says about free will, that they 'posit them as a mystery.' All four ways of arguing are really one and the same. Yes, Lady Snowdon, your sound and shrewd common sense is really a bit of pure mysticism, in a homely, secular dress. Of the four ways of putting the case,

Sabatier's is the most instructive, though Mr. Hancock's is a good second. When Sabatier says that he posits free will as a mystery, he means that he believes a certain thing to exist, though all ordinary means of knowledge show it to be quite impossible ; and the sort of solution which I am going to suggest to you myself is the same as Sabatier's, excepting in one particular."

"But just now," said Mrs. Vernon, "you held Sabatier's way up to us as an example of everything that was feeble, absurd, and hopeless."

"As it stands," said Glanville, "so it is. It is an isolated protest, with nothing to explain or justify it. To what intellectual principle does the mystic make appeal?"

"To the principle," said Lord Restormel, "that the intellect can't tell us everything, and that, in many cases, what it shows to us to be inevitable is false."

"Yes," said Glanville, "but this principle is altogether vague. In the science of mind, as this science exists at present, it has no recognised, it has no definite place. The senses we know ; logic we know ; but what is this which claims to defy both ? Every sentimentalist makes his own appeal to it when, and how, and to what extent, he pleases ; and the consequence is, he convinces nobody but himself, or those who are convinced already. In order that the assertions of mysticism may carry any weight with the world, comparable to that of the science with which it is their function to conflict, the world must be shown that these assertions are based on some specific faculty, the scope of which, as an organ of knowledge, can be defined, and the validity of which can be tested. If religion confines itself to saying, 'We

feel that we are greater than we know,' the retort of Science is overwhelming—'We know that we are less than we feel.'"

"I confess," said Mr. Hancock, "that I don't see your way out. If this mysticism of yours defies the logic of science, it refuses to submit to the only test you can put it to, except that of its own self-confidence, which is naturally no test at all."

"I think not," said Glanville. "I think we can find certain witnesses of a really respectable kind to the validity of the mystical faculty, in one of the outlying conclusions forced on us by science itself, and also in the assumption with which all science starts. Its first assumption is that the material Universe does not consist merely of the individual human mind, growing gradually conscious of its own nature and workings, in what is tantamount to a coherent dream. All thinkers have admitted, from Aristotle down to Huxley, that this conception of existence can never be formally disproved. Huxley said that our rejection of it was an act of faith. Hume said that it resulted from the sensitive, rather than the cognitive part of us; and most people would say that it results from our common sense. At any rate, it doesn't result from any of those means of knowledge on which science, when once it has begun business, relies. And now from the starting-point of science, let us turn to its two ends; for it works forwards to one end, which for practical purposes is ourselves; and it works backwards to another end, which is the beginning out of which we have risen. Well, let us take the beginning, or the tail-end of things, and carefully consider that. Here, Alistair, we shall be returning to another of your arguments, which I seemed,

when you urged it, to sweep aside as useless. In the form in which you put it, I should sweep it aside still; but I think we can give it a form which will make it practically serviceable. I'm referring to your argument that even if we are really, as science shows us to be, results of the same process which has produced the stones and the trees, and the existing Universe generally, everything which exists in ourselves—our highest qualities and our lowest, our conflicting impulses towards what seems high and low, and the reason which renders the process to which we owe our lives intelligible—must necessarily all have existed by implication, in the Cosmic Substance from which we spring. So far as science has been able to inform us hitherto, this Substance was once—I wouldn't say originally, for no state of the Substance can be properly called original—was once a gas, or jelly-like homogeneous ether, with atoms and electrons dancing in it. But whatever its condition may have been, there never was a moment of its existence when the arrangement of its parts failed to be so specific, that everything which we here to-night are thinking, doing, and saying, was not definitely and inevitably implied in the arrangement of its parts then. Well," Glanville continued, "Mr. Seaton's argument was that because we ourselves have what we call reason, and ideas of God, and because these, as we admit, were implicit in the cosmic gas, the gas must have really itself been something that we should call good and reasonable. This seems to me a singularly false conclusion. The same reasoning that leads to it would equally oblige us to admit that the gas must have also been everything that we call vile and stupid. If the sage was in it,"so

was the fool. If Christ was in it, and the Christian saints and martyrs, so was Herod, so were Diocletian and the Borgias. The sole possible inference which science allows us to draw—and it not only allows us to do this, but compels us—is that this Cause or Substance out of which we have all risen is neither wise nor foolish, neither kind nor cruel, neither pure nor impure, neither good nor evil, but all and each of these supremely, and at the same time. It is partly for this reason that Mr. Brock calls it the Unknowable. He would have come far nearer the truth if he had called it the Unthinkable; for we do know this about it—that these known and conflicting qualities have emerged from it; and we know that our own intellect is constituted in such a way that we cannot conceive these qualities as co-existing in the same source. Now the conclusion which I draw from this absolutely indubitable fact is that science itself not only starts with an assumption which neither the experience of the senses nor the logical intellect can justify—namely the existence of the external world—but leads us to a conclusion which this same logical intellect is at once compelled to accept, and is yet unable to tolerate. Science compels us to accept what are for the intellect contradictions. Well, if this holds good with regard to things as they were, why may it not hold good equally with regard to things as they are? If we find any good reason for assenting to the doctrines of religion, though these are absolutely contradicted by the detailed demonstrations of science, we do no more violence to our intellect by simultaneously accepting both, than we do by accepting the demonstrations of science itself, which have their root in contradic-

tion, equally, or even more, unmanageable. Do you catch my meaning?"

"Perfectly," said Lady Snowdon, "perfectly."

"I have been able," said Glanville, "to give you only a general sketch of it. In my own mind, indeed, it exists in a general form only. More time, and other minds would be required for its full development; and, above all, if it is to be efficacious in liberating human belief, it must be dragged to the forefront of our acknowledged intellectual principles, and not allowed to skulk like a furtive ghost in the background."

"You've given us," said Mr. Hancock knowingly, "in this principle of yours, a very good analysis of the logical meaning of mysticism; but the question is how far you would allow this principle of yours to go. All knowledge would fall to pieces if we allowed ourselves to hold contradictory beliefs about everything."

"Our rule," said Glanville, "would, I think, be very simple. We should only invoke this principle when the concrete facts of experience are explainable in no other way. Science unconsciously asserts it only under the same compulsion. With regard to religious beliefs, the only question would be this: Do our experiences of the higher kinds of civilisation, and the value which mankind puts upon them, constitute facts of a sufficiently solid character to compel our assent to the truth of whatever beliefs may be implied in them—the belief in our freedom, the belief in the persistence of our lives, the belief in the existence of some Deity through whom our lives will be perfected? Well, Lady Snowdon says that they do, for one. She's not superstitious; but, in giving us this answer, she gives us, as I said, a

mysticism in the guise of common sense. Our friend Sir Roderick, little as he knew it—good man—gave us the same mysticism on behalf of the Turf Club. And now, Hancock, I come to you. You, in the interests of common sense also, give us the same mysticism in the guise of a working hypothesis. No one maintains more strongly than you do, that one of our religious beliefs—namely, the belief in freedom—which according to science is quite as nonsensical as the others, and may, therefore, be taken to represent the others—is absolutely essential to the business of civilised life. Well, if this belief is only a working hypothesis, which we assume to be true, but at the same time know to be false, all that we value in civilisation rests on a mere game of play, or a kind of mental hypocrisy. If this is the case, and if Sir Roderick only knew it, Marcus might turn round on Sir Roderick, when Sir Roderick condemned him for cheating, and shut that virtuous censor completely up by saying, ‘Your condemnation of my cheating is more fraudulent than the cheating itself. My cheating is nothing more than an unfortunate trick of my organism, and merely amounts to the fact that I can’t play well at cards, just as you yourself can’t play well at rackets. You may be quite right in refusing to play cards with me; but if you avoid me in any other relation, you’re a damned humbug, assuming what you know to be a lie.’ Come now, Hancock, I put it to you as a sensible, wide-awake man, can you believe that all our civilisation—moral, intellectual, material, artistic, social—rests on what is merely a child’s game of pretending?”

“There,” exclaimed Lady Snowdon, “I quite agree with Mr. Glanville. I really think I must

admit myself a mystic at once, if only for the pleasure of using that argument on my own account."

"Well," said Mr. Hancock, who had the highest opinion of Lady Snowdon, and was looking forward to staying with her in her celebrated castle in Wales, "I'm quite willing to be converted. I only take up with an hypothesis as a poor substitute for a certainty."

"But all the same," said Glanville, "we've got to recollect this—and here, Hancock, I'm going to quote you again—the Universe, as science gives it to us, with all its uniformities and negations, is a big thing. We can't get rid of it. We can think our religion away, and yet go on living somehow: but so long as we live anyhow, we can't think away science. To maintain our religion, therefore, in the teeth of what science tells us, will be a tough job; and in order to gain strength for it, we must—let me once more urge on you—realise its full necessity. We must realise all that science will take away from us, so far as we regard it as the sole expression of truth; and we must realise all that religion, and religion alone, can give us. And this brings me back again to what I was saying just now, about the different effects on the individual of intense meditation on the two views of life—the scientific view and the religious. Perhaps you will think that my picture of the debilitated Pitt or Byron, or the disillusioned Romeo, as he issues from the temple of scientific meditation, was overdrawn. On the contrary, I did not draw it in lines that were marked enough. The man who believes in the three negations of science, unmitigated by any contrary belief drawn from another source, is, in proportion as he knows what these negations mean, not only

debilitated and disillusioned; he is mentally and morally eviscerated. You may not, by looking at him, be able to tell that he is ill, but he is all the while dying slowly of a kind of internal hemorrhage. A friend of mine, who lived under these scientific influences—a prosperous, active man, seemingly overflowing with good spirits—once made, for my edification, some notes of his own condition. I could see from these that, in his own eyes, he was hardly a man at all. He had become, so far as his interests and judgments went, the mere husk of a man. In performing his duties, which he continued to do less as duties than as distractions, he felt, so he said, like an actor before painted canvas, or like a dotard playing with the furniture of a doll's house. The more clearly we all of us see how our hopes, interests, ambitions—the whole structure of our civilisation—turn to ashes like this under the touch of science, the more shall we realise the necessity of religious belief, when we see how this belief brings the ashes to life; how a man's belief in his immortality makes existence great again; how his belief in his will makes him strong again; and how his belief in the God of either wisdom, beauty, or holiness—choose which you will—gives him, as Mr. Seaton said, an open top to his chimney, which enables a draught to form itself, and the dying fire to burn. I don't know," said Glanville, "that I've anything more to add, unless it be to say that, if I were to make my own choice, I would seek my Deity sooner through the suggestions of the seas and skies, the sea-stars and the twilights, and perhaps in a woman's eyes, than I would in the suggestions of a tract or a Little Bethel; and I should be satisfied with my own free-

dom could it only react on the Universe, as the gorse-blossom reacts on the summer winds that fill it, and gives them some perfume of its own. Even as things are, however, a person like myself—I hope I shall be a good example to you—can perhaps keep his soul alive by following truth in one form or another—whether it be the truth of science, which we can only disarm by facing it, or, for the present moment, the truth about our own trade, and the increase and decrease of our production, our exports and our imports, of alkali, trouserings, shirtings, pig-iron, and cheese. To me it seems that the old state of things is inverted. It is not the Deity that knocks at the door of the human heart; but the human heart that knocks at the door of the closed Universe. Somebody the other day compared me to the prophet Balaam. I can't pretend to have seen the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, yet having my eyes open; but I shall not have lived in vain if only I can say dying, 'I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh.' And now, Hancock, so far as I am concerned, you may give us your benediction."

"As this," said Mr. Hancock, after a pause, "is—and we may be thankful for it—not a political meeting, I need not propose that we give Mr. Glanville a vote of thanks. I will only say that if Mrs. Vernon, or anybody else, has thought that Mr. Glanville, in his conduct of these discussions, has endeavoured to destroy those beliefs which many—perhaps most—perhaps all of us here—hold valuable, such a person, or persons, must now be disabused of that opinion. If science has inflicted a wound on the world's religion, we must, as a preliminary to curing it, realise how deep—how seemingly mortal—

it is. If we let our clergy hide it under their absurd bandages, of one thing we may be certain—that it never will be cured at all. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I've got to make an announcement. We had, the other night, at Mr. Glanville's request, a hymn—as Mr. Brompton would have called it—at the close of one of our conferences. The distinguished author of that one will now give us another—suggested, I think—for I have glanced at it—by some of our previous discussions.”

“Before,” said Lord Restormel, who was sitting by Mr. Hancock's lamp—“before I begin to read these verses, the only excuse for which is their appropriateness to the present occasion, I should like to add a word or two of my own to the touching eloquence of our chairman. I want to thank our host for the accurate picture he has given us of conscious life in the Universe as the methods of science reveal it to us. The habitable Universe consists of so many globular surfaces, dusted or beaded with millions of dying minds, which either exude from the surfaces themselves, or are precipitated on them from some kind of ether, and which leaves nothing more behind them than dew does when it disappears from marble. Each drop, however, protests—and it calls its protest religious—that it is more than a disappearing drop—that it is an eternal Universe in itself, and has private dealings of its own with the Source to which it owes its being. But this isolated protest—such is Mr. Glanville's argument—is too weak and too vague to be effectual. His object has been to give it a larger basis—to show that it is the protest not only of private prayer, but also of all secular history—to

associate the communion of mankind with the little communion of saints—in short, to exhibit all civilisation as an altar which, whether it will or no, smokes to an unknown God. Still,” Lord Restormel continued, “the fact remains that even to such an argument as this Science, as such, is deaf. It answers, on behalf of the Universe, What is civilisation to me? Between us and the unknown God it interposes a wall of mountains which yields no more to the philosophies and the theologies of to-day than the Rock of Gibraltar yields to the scratchings of an angry kitten. Mr. Glanville has tried to point out to us a path by which, instead of assaulting the impregnable rocks, we may circumvent them—by which the intellect, not narrowing its view, but enlarging it—may get round them, over them, or under them, rather than through them—a path which, at present untravelled and choked with weeds, may even now perhaps show us some glimpse at the end of it of ‘an ampler ether, a diviner air.’ Be this, however, as it may, this which I am going to read you echoes part of his argument at least, if it does not do justice to the whole. It was suggested to me the other night by Mr. Seaton’s quotation from Nietzsche, about the desire of truth—and partly, too, by a picture in my bedroom of some wild bit of solitary coast—I suppose in Iceland. I wrote it last night, instead of taking a sleeping-draught.

“Here, where the sailless waves are pale and hoary,
 Strayed from my kind in this undreamed-of land,
 What do I see on yon bleak promontory—
 What gracious thing of wings and whiteness stand?
 Hear me, and heed, thou radiant child of glory!
 Help me, and take, and guide me by the hand.

- "O form benign, with limbs aglow
From heaven, I hold thy hands and kneel.
But what is this? Thy brows are snow,
Thy hands are stone, thy wings are steel.
- "The shining pureness of thy face
Has not the peace of paradise;
Those wings, within the all-holy place,
Were never folded o'er thine eyes.
- "And in thine eyes I see not bliss,
Nor even the tenderness of tears.
I see the blueness of the abyss,
I see the icebergs and the spheres.
- "Angel, whose hand is cold in mine,
Whose seaward eyes are not for me—
Why do I pray for wings like thine?
I would leave all and follow thee."
- "O rash one, pause, and learn my name;
I know not love, nor hate, nor ruth.
I am that heart of frost or flame,
Which burns with one desire—the truth.
- "Thou shalt indeed be lifted up
On wings like mine, 'twixt seas and sky;
But canst thou drink with me my cup?
And canst thou be baptised as I?
- "The cup I drink can only rouse
The thirst it slakes not, like the sea;
And lo, my own baptismal brows
Must be their own Gethsemane.
- "Across the paths where I must go,
The shuttles of the lightning fly
From pole to pole, and strike, nor know
If Christs or kingdoms live or die.
- "The sightless sight will glaze my eyes
Of those that neither wake nor sleep;
As down the stadium of the skies
The eyeless systems lean and sweep.
- "Canst thou endure the worlds of fire,
The worlds of snow?—or bear to mark
On each some rat-like race expire,
Which cannot leave its sinking barque?

"How wilt thou bear the creeds that bleat
Like starving sheep from frozen downs—
The eyes which trust the blinding sleet—
The anthems which the thunder drowns?

"Oh you, for whom my robes are white,
For whom my clear eyes in the gloom
Are lights—you who would share my flight,
Wait for the end. I know my doom.

"I shall become the painless pain,
The soundless sound, as deaf and dumb,
The whole creation strives in vain
To sing the song that will not come ;

"Till maimed and wingless, burnt and blind,
I am made one with God, and feel
The tumult of the mindless mind
Torn on its own eternal wheel.

'Back to your home of faiths and fears,
And he shall lead you by the hand
Who made his traitor's falling tears
The rock on which his Church should stand ;

"And mourn, and love, and take your part,
With him who, passionate and pure,
Found in his Master's broken heart
The Word by which the heavens endure.

"Forget that other Word which none
May hear and live but only I ;
Forget the Word which blinds the sun,
And blots the blueness from the sky.

"Forget, fond fool—farewell—forget
My whisper, ere I spread my wings,
That life is but the bloody sweat
That dies upon the brows of things.

"Back to the fears that rise to faith,
And find thy Lethe in the wine
That brings the life that lives through death,
And gives thy Master's blood to thine."

"Angel of truth, that wine I know.
For me, for me, with kneeling knees,
Its dews have touched the lips of woe,
And made my heart the heart of peace.

- "But peace is gone. In vain, in vain,
The kneeling knees—the sacred dew.
I will not drink that wine again
Unless, with thee, I drink it new.
- "Give me thy wings—thy wings of steel,
And I with thee will cleave the skies,
And broken on the eternal wheel
My God may take His sacrifice.
- "O pilot of the floods that pour
Their waters' twixt the truth and me,
Though Christ should call me from the shore,
I will leave all and follow thee.
- "I will not fear the floods below,
The whirlwinds shall not make me fear.
Watch me. My limbs shall never know
A trembling, nor mine eyes a tear.
- "The storm may rise, the floods may roar;
But haply, ere our day be done,
My eyes shall turn to thine once more,
And know that thine and his are one."

This composition of Lord Restormel's was much more successful than his previous one. It was greeted by Mrs. Vernon, and even by Lady Snowdon herself, with an audible outburst of satisfaction, while Miss Leighton turned to Glanville, and said in a low voice:—

"He rides upon a horse that would have flown,
Had not his heavy rider kept him down."

The author, meanwhile, under the cover of his own applause, had made a rapid readjustment of his moral and intellectual toilette; and by the time he had finished lighting one of his large cigars, he turned to Miss Leighton with his old vice-regal gallantry.

"Well," he said, "when the kingdom of faith is given back to you, what form of the Infinite shall

you select for your own adoration? My choice is made already. It will not be the Infinite which I see reflected in nature. It will be the Infinite which I see in nature when reflected in a woman's eyes."

"I doubt," said Miss Leighton, "if a woman would be very much flattered by your preference. She would probably wish to be loved, not as a sample of the Infinite—a pattern which you can match at any Bon Marché you enter. She would wish to be looked on as a bit of rare old lace, whose like you never could find if you travelled all over Europe. At the present moment I wish, on behalf of the Infinite, to thank Mr. Glanville for his prose, as we've all thanked you for your poetry. Mr. Glanville," she said, turning from Lord Restormel, who, not in the least disturbed, now joined Mrs. Vernon as she rose and left the chapel, "I never thought when we talked about Pascal at the railway-station that our conversation would ever end in this way. Fasten my cloak for me, do. The top hook is undone."

He and she were now practically alone together.

"I've tried," said Glanville, "to bore you as little as possible. I wonder how much you understood of my general meaning."

"I understood," she said, "one thing, which I'm sure nobody else did. I know who the man was whose life had been eaten out of him."

"I hope," said Glanville, "that he didn't either look or speak as if he asked to be pitied for the breakdown of his constitution. How shall I manage to forgive you for having found my secret out?"

"I can't betray it," she said. "No one would believe me if I tried to. So forgive me on account of your own reticence, if you can't on account of mine."

"It requires," said Glanville, "no great amount of stoicism not to cry out when one is no longer conscious of being hurt. One of the reasons why I have shrunk from the thought of marrying has been that I couldn't bear to let anyone have the chance of looking into anything so empty as the premises of my own mind. I should respect a woman who married me for what I have much more than a woman who married me for what I am."

Miss Leighton's sombre eyes were fixed on the distant sea, and a soft, showery moonlight was glimmering between their heavy lashes.

"I'm not sure," she said, "that I couldn't say much the same myself, if only what I happen to have were a little more than it is."

"Has your heart," said Glanville, "been eaten out of you also?"

"It has," she said, "but by something that was not knowledge—unless it was the knowledge that Eve learned in Eden. I don't know what meaning you'll attach to that. Perhaps it doesn't much matter."

"Should you object," said Glanville, laughing, "if I make a very personal observation? Whenever I look at your mouth—even when it smiles—I catch myself saying a certain line of poetry—

"'Sad as remembered kisses after death.'"

"If," she replied, "you altered one word of that verse—if you said, 'Sad with remembered,' etc., I might possibly be so imprudent as to call you a person of some penetration."

"As to questions like this," said Glanville, "I think I am. The spirits of the 'nations lost,' such as you and I, understand each other. Look here. Let me tell you how you might do me a great

favour, if you would. You said just now that it didn't matter much what I thought of you. So far as facts are concerned, it doesn't. But will you consent to teach me that anything matters? If you can stand what I am, will you allow me to offer you what I have? For example, here is a desirable marine residence, with twelve best and eighteen secondary bedrooms—— But God bless my soul! what's this? It's Sir Roderick Harborough, come to pay us an evening visit."

"Well, Rupert, old boy," said Sir Roderick, with genial gaiety, "they told us we should find you up here. A deuce of a climb, by gad. Do you think you could give me a glass of whiskey and soda-water? They told me you'd got it in the chapel. I'm glad it is not in there. In my own Abbey, when we shoot, we always lunch in the cloisters. I never allow any picnicking in the church—not even by a damned beater."

THE END

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